AN ELUSIVE LOVER

VIRNA WOODS

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AN ELUSIVE LOVER

BY

VIRNA WOODS

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AN ELUSIVE LOVER

I

AN UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

THE clock struck eight and he had not come. Constance rose and walked impatiently to the window. She was dressed for the street, but had thrown her heavy cloak across a chair till she should be ready to go out. She looked down the sidewalk, and began to scan the faces of the passers-by, that flashed a moment under her window, lit up by the glow of the electric light on the corner. Her smooth brow was gathered in a frown, and the sweetness of the thin lips was marred by a pout that was not natural to them. She wore a bonnet that showed a golden-brown circle of hair brushed back from a broad brow, and the full con-

tour of a face that Gottfried had said was shaped like a heart. Nor was the resemblance altogether fanciful, for it sloped from the broad brow to a somewhat sharp chin, the severity of whose expression was modified by the great sweetness of the mouth. A little point of hair growing lower at the middle of the forehead completed the general outline of a heart. The skin was fair, the cheeks a delicate pink, and the eyes a deep azure. The figure was slender, but well rounded, and of medium height. It was a face and a form that Gottfried had used as a model for his painting of the Madonna.

This thought passed through Constance's mind as she stood waiting at the window, leading to other thoughts that centred chiefly about the evening before, when Gottfried had been with her.

It was then he had first told her that he loved her. Only twenty-four hours had intervened, and already it seemed to her that she had known the sweet truth for years.

He had told her of his ambitions and his plans, and she had promised to wait for him until he had made a name for himself and won a home for her. At last, just before he left her, as he held her face between his hands, he had told her he would come the next night to take her to a concert. A great violinist was to be in the city, and she had been thinking of it for weeks; but she was only a poor music-teacher with an invalid mother, and she had not thought she could afford to go. But at his words her eyes had lit up with pleasure, and she had thanked him with a shy kiss, which he had passionately returned. Now she turned from the window and glanced at the inexorable clock. It was a quarter past the hour for the performance to begin; and he had said he would come at half-past seven. She sat down and tried to restrain the tears that welled up in her eyes.

"Constance!" called a voice from an adjoining room.

"Yes, mamma," the girl replied, as she

parted the portières and went into a darkened chamber where a form, indistinct in the shadow, lay on a couch.

"Has n't he come, dear?" the voice continued.

"No, mamma," the girl replied, going up to the invalid and kneeling beside her.

The mother lifted her hand and laid it against the girl's cheek. Visions and memories of her own youth returned to her.

"And do you love him very much, dear?" she asked after a pause.

"Very much, mamma," the girl answered with a sob.

But she checked herself with the instinct of sparing the invalid pain; for her mother, fragile and still pretty, notwithstanding her illness and years of disappointment, seemed to her something to be petted and cared for. So she rose without complaint, took off her bonnet and gloves, and returned to the front room to put it in order for the night.

It was only a small room in an apartment house, but it had an air of beauty and

refinement about it that reflected the nature of its occupant. With the exception of the grand piano, the furnishings were inexpensive; but there were several good etchings, a graceful jardinière containing a delicate fern, soft curtains in old rose and blue, and a silken screen before the fireplace. There was a shelf of books on the wall, and a late magazine lay open on the table.

The girl removed her wrap from the chair, turned out the gas, and drew the curtains at the windows. The soft, silvery strokes of the clock counted the hour of nine, as she passed with a smothered sigh into her mother's room.

The next morning she awoke with a thrill of pain and sense of disappointment that were quickly succeeded by hope. Surely, she thought, she would receive word from Gottfried this morning. He had been unavoidably detained the night before, and would write her a note, or come himself to explain. She felt so sure of it that the thought had something of the illusion of

reality; and she could almost hear his voice and feel the touch of his lips on her face.

But two hours later, when she was ready to go out on her daily round of lessons, no word had come. She stepped out on the street and walked briskly away, comforted by a new hope. He would be watching for her at the window of his studio, where she had first seen him several months before, and had gradually learned to look for his face. Often, indeed, she had been disappointed; but many mornings she had found him there at work, and he had never failed to see her pass. She recalled their first chance meeting. She had been caught in the rain, and was hurrying down the street toward the house of one of her pupils, when he overtook her. He was carrying an umbrella, and with some diffidence offered her its protection.

"I haf the pleasure of your acquaintance by the window," he said by way of apology.

Constance blushed and smiled, and, mindful of the new ribbons on her hat, did not

refuse the proffered shelter. In some way his face and manner inspired her with confidence; and besides, she said to herself, one is more unconventional in California than in the East. She was surprised at his German accent, for there was nothing in his appearance to suggest a foreign nationality. His features were clear-cut and firm, his eyes and hair dark; his mouth, concealed only by a mustache, was strong but sensitive. After all, it was the expression of his eyes, more than anything else, that made Constance instinctively trust him.

"Have you been here long?" she asked nervously, breaking an embarrassing silence.

"Oh, no," he said; "I am come from Germany — to make my fortune." And he laughed.

"It is beautiful here — in Los Angeles," she observed. "Are you a landscape painter?"

"A little," he said, "but more of figures and faces. What is it you call it? — portraits."

He looked at her admiringly, and thought of the Madonna he wanted to paint; but he dared not ask her to sit for him.

Notwithstanding the rain and the sudden chill in the air, it seemed all too soon that they came to the house of her pupil, and she turned and thanked him prettily for his kindness. He longed then to ask her if he might call on her, but the words choked in his throat, and instead he lifted his hat and walked thoughtfully down the street.

They had been together only a few minutes, but something had entered into the life of each and subtly changed for them the commonplace routine of the days. Now, when she passed his window, she could do no less than bow, and he learned to watch and wait impatiently for her coming.

It happened, too, with curious coincidence that he tried by various excuses to explain, that he often came out of the house just as she approached, and walked down the street with her. But sometimes for many days she missed him; and once when he reappeared

and she referred to his absence, he started and flushed, then spoke vaguely of business in the country.

"But a foreigner, my dear," her mother had protested nervously when Constance told her he had asked if he might call. But Mrs. Wilbur herself had yielded at once to the charm of his ingenuous manner.

As the acquaintance progressed, the young artist had dropped into the habit of coming in the evening with sketches to show Constance, or a volume of German verse. She had studied German a little in her school-days, and he was freshening and perfecting her knowledge of the language. At last he gained courage to ask her to sit for his Madonna, and their evenings together were supplemented by long hours in the studio.

Constance thought of these things as she walked down the street the morning after her disappointment, and of the evening he had asked her to be his wife. Her cheeks flushed and her heart beat fast as she approached the house where he lived. She

looked at his window, and her eyes filled with tears; for the blind was drawn, and the plant he had set on the broad window-sill had begun to droop.

Day after day she looked for him in vain. Her cheeks paled a little, and often her eyes showed traces of tears. But she went about her tasks as usual, taking her solitary walks, or riding lonely and unnoticed on the crowded cars through the city, to the houses of her pupils, and with unfailing patience caring for the invalid mother at home. Methodically she went through the hours of her practice; but the old joy in her music was gone. Each morning she watched for the postman with feverish impatience, and when he had gone by fell into an apathy that was broken only when, in her morning walk, she approached the studio window.

One evening, just a week after the night of the concert, she sat by the window, gazing idly down the street. She lived in a quiet suburb in the southeastern part of the city, on a street that had been built up within

the last two or three years. There were roses and fuchsias and geraniums in the garden, and a large pepper-tree. The sidewalk also was lined with a row of pepper-trees. She looked out on a succession of pretty cottages, each with its grass-plot and border of flowers.

Suddenly she started to her feet with a low cry. Gottfried was approaching the house, and, seeing her at the window, lifted his hat and smiled.

She ran to the door to meet him.

"I have been so worried about you," she exclaimed, as she led the way into the house. "Where have you been so long?"

"Why, I did not think you would be looking for me yet," he said in surprise. "I haf to your house early come to show you some sketches."

He had learned English rapidly in the last few months, and it was rarely that he lapsed into German idiom. Constance noticed it now with some surprise.

As the door closed behind them, he took

her face in his hands and kissed it. She clung to him with a strange feeling that if she did not hold him he might vanish.

"But you are not ready to go," he said, looking at the dainty house dress she wore.

"To go?" she echoed; but before he had time to reply, she spoke again. "Where have you been all the week?" she asked. "Why didn't you write, if you had to go away?"

He turned white, and, staggering back a step, clutched at the piano to support himself.

"Is it a week since I have been here?" he asked in a low tone.

"Yes," she said. "Don't you even remember how long it is? and that we did not get to the concert at all?"

He did not notice the reproach in her voice.

"Again!" he muttered. "*Mein Gott, mein Gott!*"

"What is it?" she cried, going up to him and laying her hands on his shoulders. "Gottfried, Gottfried!"

"*Mein armes Liebchen!*" he replied. "Why did I ask you to be my wife?"

"But don't you love me any more?" she asked; and the heart-like face was so near his own that he bent his head and kissed it.

"Can you trust me, dear?" he said. "I cannot tell you why I did not come. I can only say that it was not within my power. Can you believe me?"

She looked in his eyes and read the truth of his words.

"Yes," she said; "strange as it is, I believe you."

"And you will not question me?" he asked.

"No," she replied; "I will not question you."

"I will show you the sketches," he said; and as they sat down at the table, he drew them from his pocket.

They embraced views of picturesque parts of the city and of Pasadena, and of the Sierra Madre Villa, surrounded with peppers and palms, the serrated outlines of

mountains rising in the background. There were also several figure-studies; a Spanish señorita with a guitar, a child-faced flower-girl with sprays of lilies and bunches of La France roses drooping from her basket; and an old woman gathering driftwood from the beach.

"You will be great, Gottfried," said Constance at last, looking up from the sketches and letting her eyes rest on his face.

"Do you think so?" he asked musingly. "Do you think so, or is it only the fancy of love?"

"No, it is true," she replied; and she began to speak in detail of the perfection of outline and shading in the work.

Gottfried was surprised.

"I did not know you knew so much about art," he said.

"Oh," she answered laughing, "I have studied art subjects assiduously of late. I want to be able to understand my husband's work."

She said the words softly, and a faint

flush deepened the rose of her cheeks. He moved nearer, and, resting his elbow on the table, held out his open palm to her. She leaned towards him and laid her cheek in it.

Long afterward she remembered the caress and dreamed of it with intense longing; and before sorrow came, it was one of the beads in her rosary of recollections that she counted happily at night before she fell asleep.

Before he went away, he picked up the volume of Heine he had given her and handed it to her.

"Read me a poem of the *Harzreise*," he said. "It is so long since I have read my Heine that I have almost forgotten it. But I remember that his verse is melodious and tender and full of charming imagery."

She opened the book and began reading in sweet, low tones.

"Ah," he said, as she finished, "I can see them now — the '*grauen Schlossruinen in dem Morgenlichte stehn.*' And the old

dreams rise up again and my heart's door opens to them, indeed. Now read me the dream of the Fatherland; for when you read to me, *mein Liebchen*, I can almost feel myself on the high mountain by the Rhine, listening to the *Zaubermelodien* of the waves that murmur below, and looking down on the dear *Deutschland* blooming clear in the sunshine."

When she had finished reading, he looked at her with the smile in his eyes that she had learned to love.

"Ah, *mein Liebchen*," he said, "you catch the music of the German verse — the music that can be created by the instrument of no other language. I love to hear you read about the Fatherland. But, do you know, my memories of Germany already seem vague, like the visions of a dream. All the past, in fact," he added, "seems like a dream, up to the last few months, since I have known you. Perhaps that is because love has become to me the only reality. But Heine makes me see Germany again and

love it; and I think I would have the *Heimweh* if it were not for you. But some time I will take you there, and we will see it together."

"But you are losing your German accent and your ridiculous idioms, Gottfried," said Constance, teasingly; "and when you go there, they will take you for an American. I should n't wonder," she added with a smile, "if, by that time, you would speak German with an English accent."

He had risen to go, and, taking her face between his hands in his favorite caress, he silenced with kisses the audacious lips.

When he had gone, the happiness and confidence that Constance had felt in his presence were disturbed by a vague sense of trouble. What could be behind the mystery of his unexplained absence of a week? She was too young and trustful and too much in love not to believe in his loyalty; but there was a strangeness about it all that stirred her mind to an uneasiness of which she could not rid herself.

Meantime, Gottfried was walking away from the house, muttering under his breath.

"Again, *mein Gott, mein Gott! Mein armes Liebchen!*"

With the words, he drew from his pocket two concert tickets, and tearing them to bits gave them to the wind.

II

CASTLE-BUILDING

Constance Wilbur was an only child. Ever since she could remember, her parents had been in straitened circumstances. Her mother, however, had not allowed her to grow up in ignorance of the fact that she belonged to an aristocratic family. Mrs. Wilbur's mother had been a Randolph, and her father belonged to a wealthy family of Virginia. A strain of Quaker blood in his ancestry had asserted itself in him, and on account of religious scruples he had freed his slaves, thus impoverishing himself. His wife, who had been a great belle, was not quite contented in the Ohio home to which he had subsequently taken her; and their only child inherited her aspirations and ambitions. As the child grew into a woman, however, a romantic element in her nature

had led her into what her mother termed the folly of an unfortunate marriage. Harvey Wilbur was an obscure journalist, with more brains and nobility of character than ancestry or wealth. But his wife was happy with him, and, like her mother, transferred the dreams of her own wealth and social success in which she had indulged, to plans for her child.

Constance had been carefully educated at home. From her mother she had learned music and French and embroidery; from her father mathematics, history, literature, and Latin. A year of elective studies at a small college, in which she had gained her somewhat limited knowledge of German, had completed the instruction she had received.

At this time her father, who had all his life been engaged in a hard struggle for existence, broke down in health, and was given no hope by his physician unless he should try the effect of a more favorable climate. Strongly against his will, he at

length yielded to the persuasions of his wife and daughter, and sacrificed the little home that represented the savings of many years to remove to California. In the genial climate of Los Angeles he had, for a time, seemed to recover strength; but the change was only temporary, and after a few months of alternating hope and fear he died. Mrs. Wilbur, who had always been frail, had broken down under the strain of nursing and anxiety and grief. Thus upon Constance had devolved the responsibility of the support of her mother and herself in a strange land.

She had taken a few piano lessons of a noted teacher in the city, and through him had secured a number of pupils, the most of them belonging to the wealthy classes. A number of houses she visited were elegant residences on Figueroa and Adams Streets, and she felt keenly the good-natured condescension and patronage with which she was treated. As she had found little opportunity of meeting people in any but business

relations, she had made few acquaintances and no intimate friends. The house in which she and her mother lived was occupied by two families besides themselves. One consisted of two unmarried sisters, who followed the trade of dressmaking; the other was composed of an agent for patent medicines, his showy little wife, and their ten-year-old child. While Mrs. Wilbur and her daughter were always kind and courteous to their fellow-lodgers, they found the sisters so reserved and the others so uncongenial that they retired more and more into themselves. Until Constance had made the acquaintance of Gottfried Jäger, she and her mother had been very lonely, and on this account it had been the easier for Mrs. Wilbur to give up her apparently hopeless dreams of a brilliant marriage for her daughter.

"But Gottfried will be great some day, and — who knows? — rich," her daughter had said, to silence her regrets.

Of Gottfried's past history the girl had been able to learn nothing beyond the brief

statement he had made to her on the occasion of their first meeting: "I am come from Germany — to make my fortune." She had, indeed, questioned him a little about his family and friends, but without success.

"I am alone in the world — but for you," he had answered her.

The painting of the Madonna went on, the face growing day by day more beautiful.

"It is not my face," said Constance one day, a little sadly; "you are idealizing it."

"No," said Gottfried, "it is all there; it is all there sometimes when you are looking at the child."

For, several times, when he was outlining the figures, she had posed with the child of Gottfried's landlady in her arms, and her heart thrilled and warmed as she held the plump and rosy baby to her breast and felt the eyes of Gottfried lovingly studying her face. Gottfried, too, was moved by the sweet picture as he had never been moved

before. Mrs. Flannigan, standing in the doorway and watching them, declared that Constance looked like the holy mother herself.

"And it's proud I am to have my baby in the picture," she added; not knowing that in this case, indeed, the face was to be idealized.

The hours in the studio were perhaps the happiest hours the lovers passed. Here they discussed their dreams of Gottfried's success and their plans for the future. The splendor of the castles they builded dazzled their eyes so that they did not see the bare and dingy studio, brightened only by the bits of color in the half-finished paintings and pastels that were scattered about on easels and tables and against the walls.

"I hope," said Gottfried musingly one day, when they had been talking over a bright plan for the future, "that it will not be a *Schloss am Meere*."

"Oh, Gottfried," cried Constance, with a note of pain in her voice, "do not prophesy

such terrible things for our beautiful dreams. I still see our Castle by the Sea, with the golden and rosy clouds about it, and I will not hear the song of lamentation, nor see the tears and the black mourning-robes. You are cruel to suggest the poem to me now."

Gottfried had been obliged to lay down his brush and go over to her to comfort her.

But the painting was finished at last, and before Gottfried took it to the dealer's on Spring Street, where he had arranged to exhibit it for sale, he took it up to the house to show to Constance's mother.

"I believe it is a masterpiece," she said, as she looked at the beautiful face so like her daughter's. "It is a shame you can't hang it in a Paris salon and not have to sell it to some of the unappreciative newly-rich here."

She spoke a little bitterly, a faint flush of resentment at their poverty rising to her wan cheeks.

"Never mind," said Gottfried, cheerily; "I shall be glad if the newly rich prove appreciative enough to take it. Its sale might make my reputation; at least it would probably enable me to get orders from these despised owners of the shekels."

So the painting was hung in the dealer's window, and the three waited anxiously for the result.

They had not long to wait. Gottfried, indeed, had been away several days on one of his mysterious absences; but, when he returned, he said nothing about it, and Constance had not the courage to mention it. One evening, not long after his return, as Constance sat by the shaded lamp reading to her mother, there was a violent pull at the door-bell. Constance knew it was Gottfried, and laid down her book to go to the door. At the first sight of his face, she divined the news he had to tell.

"*Mein Liebchen*," he exclaimed, catching her rapturously in his arms, "it is sold. And at such a price! If this means any-

thing for the future, it means that we can be married before long."

Constance blushed, and, drawing herself from his arms, led him out to her mother's room to tell the good news.

"Mr. Robins said a man came in and asked the price of the picture," he began. "Mr. Robins told him I had not set the price, but wished to negotiate about it with any one that cared for an interview. With that, he said, the man drew out a packet of money and laid it on the counter. 'Give him that,' he said; 'and if he is not satisfied, here is my master's card. I was told to have the picture sent home at once.' When Mr. Robins opened the packet and saw what was in it, he knew I would not refuse the offer; so he had the painting sent to the address on the card."

"And who was the purchaser?" asked Constance eagerly.

"Rex Carrington of Figueroa Street," said Gottfried.

"It must be one of the newly rich, after all," laughed Mrs. Wilbur.

"He is — what do you call it? — a great swell," said Gottfried. "I have never seen him, but I have heard of him. He is a young man and immensely rich."

A shade of annoyance had crossed Constance's fair face.

"I don't know," she said hesitatingly, "that I altogether like — his having my picture."

"*Ei!* that is so," cried Gottfried suddenly. "I was a fool to paint your face for another man to look at."

"Forgive me, Gottfried," said Constance with quick contrition; "I should not have spoken so. We will think only of the good fortune that has come to you."

With that, they fell to castle-building again; and Mrs. Wilbur, listening to their happy chatter, thought with a stifled sigh of the plans she had formed with her own lover in her youth. He was to have become a great writer; and the long years of poverty and disappointment she had spent with him had never shaken her faith in his

genius. But with Gottfried, she said to herself, it might be different; and Constance might yet realize the dreams that in her own life had been unfulfilled.

Gottfried stayed later than usual that evening and tried with Constance some German songs that he had given her. As he went away at last, they stood talking a moment at the door, and their fresh young voices reached the ears of the two dressmakers who sat patiently stitching in the room across the hall. Emma, who was much the younger of the two and was still almost pretty, looked up at her sister and smiled.

"I like to hear their voices," she said; "it makes me think of the times when Robert used to come to see me and the happy days before he died."

Agnes, who had never had a lover, suppressed a sigh of envy at her sister's recollections, and bent lower over the dress that must be taken home the next day.

"Good-by, *mein Liebchen*, good-by," whis-

pered Gottfried; and as Constance turned back into the house, Emma Burroughs averted her face that her sister might not see the sudden tears in her eyes.

III

REX CARRINGTON

THE house of Mrs. Carrington on Figueroa Street was built in the style of the Renaissance, with tower, domes, and many gables. It was of soft red stone, with wide verandas and little balconies in unexpected nooks, and was set in the midst of extensive grounds that rose in low terraces from the wide street. The driveway passed under an open porch at the side of the house, supported by Ionic pillars. It was one of the handsomest and most valuable of the many beautiful residences on the fashionable street.

The adjoining house was a picturesque residence built in imitation of a French château, and was occupied by a German baron and his wife, who were passing the winter in California and had leased the house of a United States senator, whose family had

accompanied him to Washington. Mrs. Carrington herself was the widow of the younger son of an English nobleman, who had made his fortune on Australian sheep-ranches. He had retired from the business and removed to Los Angeles some years before his death.

The interior of the elegant house he had built was quite in keeping with its external appearance. A broad vestibule floored with marble tiles, the niches of its walls filled with marble figures and busts, opened through curtained archways into apartments furnished variously according to the styles of different countries and epochs of history. A drawing-room in the style of Louis XVI. was separated by tapestry portières from an Oriental apartment furnished with rugs and cushions like a harem, and scented with the odors of sandal wood and attar of roses. A Japanese boudoir, its walls ornamented with a metal fret-work and its lacquer tables and ebony cabinets filled with bricabrac of fine pottery and hand-carved ivory, communicated with a private sitting-room carved

entirely of teak-wood, its tables and chairs supported by forms of dragons and beasts of the jungles. A large banquet-room was patterned after the Roman style of the Augustan age, low cushioned seats being substituted for couches about the tables. In an adjoining dining-room, the Swiss hand-carved sideboard was crowded with Dutch crockery and Austrian and Bohemian glass. The walls, too, were adorned with pictures formed of Dutch tiles, the blue and white faces staring stonily from rural environments of the same impossible colors ; and the floor was of blue and white tiles.

In the centre of the second floor was a "chamber of silence," with padded walls and thickly carpeted floor, where no sound from the adjoining rooms or from the street outside could enter; and whose pillowed couches and deeply cushioned chairs invited the tired habitué of crowded drawing-rooms to repose.

On every hand, in *fin de siècle* style, were to be seen rare works of art and fine bricabrac and curios. Portières, — some tapes-

try, some silk, and some of Japanese beads in rainbow colors — when drawn back, showed bewildering vistas of diversely furnished rooms, multiplied by the reflections of long mirrors to the semblance of a maze.

Mrs. Carrington sat in the morning-room, waiting for breakfast to be served. She was a woman past middle age, tall and slender, with clear-cut features and a haughty expression. As she sat waiting, she toyed impatiently with the silken tassel of her morning-gown. Her lips were compressed and her brows were gathered together in a frown. At length she rose and touched a bell.

"Send Perkins to me," she said to the servant that answered the summons.

A moment later the man appeared, sleek, well-groomed, obsequious.

"How is your master this morning?" the lady asked.

"If you please, ma'am," was the reply, "I don't think he 'll be down this morning. He has one of his headaches again."

"This is very strange, Perkins," was the reply, "and I don't like it. He has never remained in his room so long before. I shall insist upon seeing him if he does not come down to breakfast. It is my opinion that he requires the services of a physician."

"I beg pardon, ma'am," said the servant insinuatingly; "but no one could expect a lady to know about these things. The last master I had took longer than Mr. Rex to get over the effects of a banquet."

"Do not mention your last master to me, Perkins," said the lady irritably; "you know he was nothing but the son of a broker."

"But if you will only be patient, ma'am," returned the servant, "Mr. Rex will be all right in a day or two."

"I shall be patient no longer," said Mrs. Carrington, rising with sudden decision. "I am going to see my son."

With a quick though apologetic movement, the valet interposed himself between her and the door.

"I beg of you, I implore you, not to think of such a thing," he said, "Mr. Rex would be very angry when he knew; I should lose my place. And you would not wish to see him, ma'am, indeed you would not," he added persuasively. "He is not like himself, and it would not be pleasant for you to remember."

"Nonsense, Perkins," said the lady, endeavoring to pass him. "Who should know the weaknesses of a man if not his own mother? Stand aside, for I am going to see him."

The perplexed valet looked at her appealingly, but she was inflexible.

"Let me at least go up and prepare him a little," he began, seeking to gain time.

"No, I do not wish him prepared," said Mrs. Carrington. "I wish to see him as he is."

"But I beg of you," persisted the valet, about to fall on his knees in his excitement, "I beg of you not to go."

The lady made an imperative gesture for

him to stand aside, and had already lifted her hand toward the door, when a bell rang violently.

"That 's Mr. Rex now, ma'am," exclaimed Perkins, a look of intense relief crossing his face. "If you will wait a while longer, I think he will come down to breakfast." As Mrs. Carrington returned to her seat by the window, he went eagerly to answer his master's summons.

As the valet entered the room, a handsome young man, with disheveled dress and tumbled hair, rose impatiently from his couch.

"What 's the matter with you, Perkins?" he exclaimed angrily. "Make me a cup of coffee; and make it strong."

"When did you come in, sir?" asked the servant. "I did n't know" —

"Stop talking, stupid, and be quick about the coffee. What day of the month is it?" he asked suddenly.

"The fifteenth," was the reply.

"Have I any engagements for to-day, Perkins?"

"Yes, sir," the servant answered; "the bicycle ride to the beach with the baron and baroness."

"Have I missed anything of importance?"

"Yes, Mr. Rex," said the valet a little fearfully; "Miss Alicia's reception night before last."

"By thunder!" exclaimed the young man, springing up and beginning to pace the room. "She 'll show that beautiful temper of hers the next time I see her."

"If you please, sir," interposed the valet, "I took the liberty of sending her word you was ill, sir; and she sent over yesterday to inquire about you."

"You 're a treasure, Perkins," was the reply. "But why the devil don't you get me the coffee?" he added irritably.

The servant left the room, and Rex Carrington continued pacing up and down the floor.

"There 's sure to be a row with the old lady," he mused, "and a hot interview with

my affectionate fiancée. If it were not for Perkins to look after me, I 'd never get out of my messes. I wonder how many bottles I drank that night," his thoughts went on; "it was deuced fine Burgundy."

The valet reëntered with a cup of steaming black coffee on a tray. Rex seized it eagerly and gulped it down. His brain cleared, and forgotten recollections rushed back to his mind.

"Oh, I say, Perkins," he asked carelessly, as he set the cup down on the table beside him, "did you find the address of the Madonna?"

"No, Mr. Rex," was the reply; "I did n't."

"Confound you, Perkins," exclaimed his master, "why did n't you?"

"Well, Mr. Rex," began the valet, "if Miss Alicia" —

"Miss Alicia be ——," exclaimed the young man violently; "what has Miss Alicia to do with it, blockhead?"

"If she should hear of it, sir" —

"And how is she to hear of it, if you don't take it into your meddlesome head to tell her?" retorted Rex. "Do you take her for my confessor?"

"But the last time, you know, sir," persisted the servant.

"Silence!" thundered the young man in a fury. "Now go," he added in a calmer voice, "and get me the address at once."

"But your toilet, Mr. Rex," Perkins objected. "You can't go down to breakfast till you have changed, and your mother's expecting you."

"You're right, Perkins," said the young man carelessly. "The conventionalities must be observed, even if affairs of state have to wait."

An hour later, when he had breakfasted with his mother and placated her displeasure to the best of his ability, and had dispatched Perkins to the dealer's on Spring Street, he went into his study and sat down before the painting of the Madonna. The lips smiled at him, and the clear blue eyes looked

tranquilly in his. A soft halo hovered over the deep gold of the hair. He wondered if the model could be as beautiful as the painting.

He gazed at it long, and something new and tender stirred in his selfish heart.

"She is a little saint," he said softly, "and I would die rather than harm a hair of that pretty head. What I want to get her address for I don't understand. It could be nothing to me unless I meant to break with Alicia." And as he thought of Alicia's proud, cold face, his heart grew hard again.

But the blue eyes of the picture smiled at him with strange depths of tenderness, and involuntarily he held out his arms toward the canvas.

"My darling," he said brokenly, "I must find you. You, and you alone, can make a man of me."

IV

THE SYMBOL

THE days passed happily for Constance. When Gottfried was at home there were the daily morning greetings at the studio window to look forward to, and all his evenings he passed with her. If he chanced to be out of town, still she had the memory of his words, his looks, his tones, and his caresses to ponder over. And the sweet world-old dream had thrown a spell over the earth, — the blue of the sky, the soft haze that lay over the mountains, the cool salt breeze of the afternoons, the very streets and gardens, wore a different aspect to her. She had stepped into a world of enchantment; or rather, she told herself, she had been asleep, and he was the fairy prince that had awakened her. Could it be the same old work-aday world in which she had suffered and

toiled and grown weary, — this beautiful earth with its perfect days, its mornings of hope and its evenings of delight? Could this be her life, once so dull and monotonous, through whose illumined atmosphere she looked upon her beautiful castles in the air?

"Ah," she sighed sometimes, pierced with a momentary pain, "if, as Gottfried once said, they should be but castles by the sea!"

But she turned from the thought and fell to dreaming again.

Evening after evening, as she read or sang or talked with her lover, or walked with him in silence on the quiet suburban streets, the moonlight softening the outlines of gabled roofs and gardens beautiful with pepper-trees and palms, she felt her mind expand from contact with his thoughts. He was so wise, so noble, so true. And then she felt a thrill of pride that she possessed the gift of his love. He was a genius, who belonged to the world and to the future, and he had chosen

her to make his happiness. A new dignity and sweetness had come to her with the experience; a new sign and seal of womanhood. With her happiness the curves of face and form grew softer, the delicate color of her cheeks deepened in more frequent blushes, and the light laughter rippled oftener from her lips. So she grew daily more bewitchingly beautiful, and daily the love of Gottfried deepened and grew.

They sat together one evening in a wide seat by the window, she leaning against him and letting him play with her slender hands. They were silent, as they often were, satisfied to be together, and not feeling the need of speech. But at last Gottfried broke the silence.

"Why do you wear no rings, Constance?" he asked, holding up the little pink palm.

She gave an amused laugh.

"Because my purse cannot afford them," she answered lightly.

"I am glad you do not wear them," her lover replied, "for I do not like them.

There are so many legends and superstitions connected with rings that I have never wanted to give you one. You know the song of 'The Mill-Wheel': —

> *'Sie hat ihr Treue gebrochen;*
> *Das Ringlein sprang entzwei.'*

If I gave you a ring and any accident befell it, I should have a superstitious feeling that our love was doomed. But more than that," he went on, "I have read somewhere that the ring was an ancient symbol of slavery, indicating by its encircling band the power that held the wearer in a bond of servitude. From this idea, the betrothal ring came to indicate the possession of the woman by the man. So I have felt that I could not humiliate you and degrade our love by placing a ring on your finger. Are you sorry, *mein Liebchen?* Have you perhaps wanted one and wondered why I did not give it to you?"

She had indeed wanted some tangible evidence of their love that she might carry with her and look at and touch, especially

when he was away, to assure herself that her happiness was not all a dream. But she would not hurt him by admitting the fact.

"It is enough to have your love," she said softly, as she nestled her head on his shoulder.

"But see, *mein Liebchen*," he went on, drawing a little packet from his pocket and untying the cord; "I did not forget you. I wanted you to have something that would be a symbol of our love."

She leaned forward expectantly as he unwrapped the package and lifted from a cushioned box a Trilby locket suspended on a slender silver chain. The locket itself was of frosted silver and set in the centre with a pearl.

"See," he said; "it is shaped like a heart; why should it not remind you that you carry my heart with you wherever you go? And in the centre of the heart is a pearl, to tell you of my truth and loyalty."

"It is beautiful, Gottfried," she said, taking it in her hand; "and the idea, too,

is beautiful. I shall prize it much more than a ring."

"Open it, *mein Liebchen*," he said.

She did so, and gave a little cry of pleasure, for the face of Gottfried looked out at her with serene and tender eyes. She looked at the tinted miniature a moment, then pressed it to her lips.

"No, *mein Liebchen*, no," her lover laughed; "I will take that on my own lips."

When he had made good his words he slipped the chain over her head, and she sat with the locket clasped in her palm.

"You see," he laughed, "how you hold my heart in your hand."

"And in my heart as well," she answered solemnly.

V

A CHALLENGE

One evening, several weeks after the sale of the painting, Gottfried told Constance he was to meet the purchaser at the dealer's at eight o'clock.

"So I shall have to leave you early to-night," he said; "but to-morrow I may have good news to tell you." For they had both been dreaming of future orders.

She stood at the door watching him as he went away. He turned at the gate and lifted his hat, then walked briskly down the street.

The evening was warm for the time of year, and the scent of orange blossoms was in the air. The electric light shone through the pepper-trees, casting weird shadows on the sidewalk. Gottfried walked several blocks down the quiet street, past his studio

and the house where Constance had left him the day of their first meeting; and at the next corner took the electric car into the city. His thoughts dwelt speculatively on the message he had received. Rex Carrington's man, the same that had purchased the picture, had gone to the store a few days before and left word that his master wished to see the painter of the Madonna, and would be at the dealer's for that purpose at eight o'clock Saturday evening. He was sure today was Saturday, for he had taken the precaution to speak of it incidentally before Constance, lest his memory should play him one of its unaccountable tricks, and she had made no comment. He felt certain the young man wanted to order another picture; perhaps he wanted to sit for his own portrait. His example would surely bring other patrons; and visions of success and prosperity, with Constance as the central figure of his dreams, made his heart beat fast and his dark eyes glow with suppressed excitement.

He changed cars, and after a brief ride alighted again, in the heart of the city. The streets were noisy with the rush of cars and the rattling of late delivery wagons; the sidewalks were crowded with pedestrians. He walked a short distance, looking in at the brilliantly lighted windows, and in a few moments entered the dealer's, just as the hand of the clock pointed to eight.

Mr. Robins, a fair, bland man of middle age, walked up behind the counter and nodded familiarly.

"You 're in time, I see," he remarked.

Gottfried assented.

"Do you know," he said, "what Mr. Carrington wanted to see me for?"

"No, I don't," answered the dealer; "but I have a pretty strong suspicion; for his man was in the other day asking for the address of the model of your picture, which I am glad to say I was unable to give him."

Gottfried flushed, and a look of unaccustomed anger flashed in his eyes, changing completely the expression of his face.

"Why does he want to know that?" he cried with suppressed excitement.

The dealer shrugged his shoulders.

"It is not for me to say," he replied; "but if the lady is a friend of yours, I would advise you not to give her address to Rex Carrington."

"You know him, then?" asked Gottfried quickly.

"Only by reputation," was the reply; "but that is enough."

Gottfried paced once or twice the length of the store, then stopped before the dealer with forced composure.

"Yes," he said; "I will haf patience; I will wait for him; and when he comes, I will appoint a meeting and I will fight him; it is a German duel I will fight him, with swords."

In his excitement, the elegance of English he had striven so hard to acquire was forgotten.

The dealer was surprised at his vehemence, and, fearing trouble for himself, tried

to calm the storm he had raised. It would be very unpleasant if an altercation should take place on his premises. Occasionally a customer came in and occupied his attention; the young artist paced up and down the room, or gazed moodily out of the window.

The minute hand passed slowly around the face of the clock, and still Gottfried waited, but in vain.

"He is a coward," he said; "a black-hearted coward. He is afraid to come."

"He has probably been detained unexpectedly," said Mr. Robins quietly. "He will doubtless send you apologies to-morrow."

But Gottfried would not listen to the explanation.

"He is afraid," he reiterated. "But if he thinks to draw back from the meeting now, he does not know with whom he has to deal. I shall learn what it is he wants. I shall pay well attention to him," slipping in his speech in his anger. "He need not think he will escape so easily."

Again the dealer regretted his indiscretion in making the suggestion that had so enraged the artist. But who would have thought, he reflected, that so quiet a man would work himself into a passion over an uncertainty?

Gottfried went away reluctantly when it was time to close the shop, leaving vehement messages which the dealer had no intention of delivering.

The next day, hearing nothing from his patron, Gottfried sent a peremptory note to the house on Figueroa Street, containing the challenge he had threatened. The message was answered by Perkins to the effect that his master was out of town for an indefinite period. The note itself Perkins carefully unsealed and read; sealing it again in case it should be called for, but determining at the same time that he would keep it from his master if possible.

"It 's just as I knew it would be," he grumbled. "He is n't out of one scrape till he 's neck-deep in another. He 's got a hot-

headed Dutchman to deal with this time, and no mistake. He 's sure to fight if he gets this challenge, and drag me into the trouble some way — have me arrested, like as not. His mother and Miss Alicia will blame me, too, if anything happens. Look here, Perkins, you 're in the worst hole you 've been in yet, but so is Mr. Rex ; and if you pull him through this all right, you ought to get something handsome for it."

In the mean time, Gottfried had to evade the questions Constance put to him, and to comfort her for the evident disappointment she felt that he had not received an order for another picture.

But as time went on, orders began to come in to him, and he worked assiduously, finding his models chiefly in the Spanish quarter of the city, and along the beaches. He refused to let Constance pose for him again, but he was engaged on a portrait of her for himself. He painted her in a white dress, with puffed elbow sleeves and V neck, and with La France roses in her lap and in her

hair. In the sweet naturalness of the position and the bright, glad look of the face, the portrait seemed to him more human and so more beautiful than the Madonna. He placed the canvas so that he might see the face when he first opened his eyes in the morning; and at night before he fell asleep, it smiled at him, lit up with the faint white radiance of the electric light that shone through the studio window. It almost seemed to him sometimes that it was her actual presence, the face was so full of joy and tenderness.

The painting was a delightful pretext for the continuance of the long hours they had spent in the studio together; and when he had finished the face, he lingered over the details of the draperies, reluctant to give up the pleasure of the sittings. At last, Constance could not fail to notice it.

"I believe you are more interested in my dress than in my face," she said archly; "you are spending ever so much more time on it."

"I will go back to the face and retouch it," he said. "And yet, I don't believe I can make it more perfect than it is."

There was no egotism in the words; he was not thinking of the perfection of the work, but only of the beauty of the woman he loved.

In addition to his painting, Gottfried was doing some black and white work for periodicals, but nothing of a definite kind. He might have obtained a salaried position that would have settled for him the troublesome financial question and enabled him to marry at once; but his frequent and irregular absences rendered this impossible. They interfered also with his retaining the pupils that had come to him; but there were some that were loyal to him, notwithstanding the fact that it was no unusual experience for them to go to the studio and find it empty. On these occasions the landlady could give no information as to his whereabouts; he never left word or made any explanation of his absence. Even to Constance he did not speak

of the matter, and since the first instance, she had not ventured to refer to it herself. It is true that she trusted him and believed that in time he would explain everything to her; but more than once she was anxious and disturbed by his sudden and unexpected departure. His absences were rendered the more inexplicable by the fact that, as far as she knew, he had few acquaintances and no friends; and he did not seem to gather any material for work, for he never showed her any sketches that could have been made while he was away. Another peculiarity that she had noticed more than once was that upon his return his English was more broken than usual, as though he had been speaking German in his absence. A day or two, however, sufficed to give him the easy command of English he had so marvelously acquired in the few months of their acquaintance.

So the winter passed with its rains; and the transient green of the hills began to give place to the browns and yellows and

golds of the summer, hung in the distance with violet and purple mists. In the city constant irrigation had kept the gardens green and beautiful; and Constance herself had carefully tended the little grass-plot, shaded with its symmetrical pepper-tree and brightened with its tall geraniums and fuchsias.

Gottfried had tried repeatedly to see Rex Carrington; and that young gentleman himself had left more than one message for Gottfried at the dealer's; but so far they had failed to meet. Notwithstanding the efforts of Perkins to keep his master out of trouble, Gottfried had at length succeeded in sending a challenge, which Rex had insolently accepted. He had declared it beneath the dignity of a gentleman to meet on terms of equality a low-bred German dauber in paints; but he wanted to show his adversary that his countrymen were not the only men that could wield a sword. His pride and the contempt he felt for his antagonist had prevented him from denying the unjust

imputations of the latter; but he was determined more than ever to win the beautiful girl, who had posed for the Madonna, away from the painter, who was evidently her lover, and whom he denominated a cad.

When Gottfried had read the acceptance of his challenge, which Mrs. Flannigan had handed him one morning as he entered the house, he began to pace his studio in deep thought. He had written impetuously and had not considered the difficulty of securing a second; and for some time no one occurred to him of whom he would dare to ask the dangerous favor. He smiled as he mentally ran over the list of his acquaintances; Mr. Robins, the dealer, the few patrons he knew personally, and the fathers of several of his pupils; most of the latter engaged in business. Their quiet respectability would be deeply shocked at the mere suggestion of a duel; and as for a man with a family and a reputation to keep up in the community, he knew it would be useless to dream of such a thing. But at a sudden thought, his

face brightened, and seizing his hat he rushed out upon the street.

It was nearly noon when he entered a quiet coffee-house a little beyond the business centre of the city, and sat down at a table near the door. He ordered a steak and a glass of beer; but even after they appeared, he seemed more interested in watching the people that entered the place than in devoting himself to his modest meal.

He had not long to wait before a young man came in and made his way to the table at which Gottfried sat alone.

"*Wie geht 's*," he said carelessly, as he dropped into a seat and duplicated Gottfried's order.

Gottfried returned the greeting with a smile. The newcomer was a young German, apparently about thirty, with a frank, blond face and a fine, broad figure. He began to speak rapidly in German.

"What 's the matter with you to-day?" he said. "You look as though you were in trouble."

"So I am," answered Gottfried; "and if I did not think it presumption to trouble a stranger with my private affairs, I would tell you about it."

"Strangers?" said the other heartily. "What of that? We are countrymen."

"Thank you," said Gottfried; "but even so, I feel that I have no claim upon you. We have met here three or four times in the most casual way; and we do not even know each other's names."

"That is soon remedied," said his companion with a laugh. "I am Heinrich Dierssen, recently a student and from the city of Berlin; but now, a Los Angeles doctor without patients."

"A doctor!" exclaimed Gottfried; "so much the better. But I," he went on, "I too am from the Fatherland. I am Gottfried Jäger, painter and teacher, with a few pupils and a few patrons, one of whom has gotten me into trouble."

"If I can render you any assistance," said Dierssen, setting down his glass and

looking at his companion with frank blue eyes, "I shall be happy to do so."

Then Gottfried told him his trouble, as briefly and clearly as possible, at the same time warning him of the danger of the enterprise. To Heinrich Dierssen, who was so recently from a German university and who carried on his person more than one mark of the sword, the American prejudice against dueling was inexplicable.

He was deeply interested in as much of the artist's grievance as he had divulged to him, and correspondingly indignant with the young aristocrat who had not denied the accusations that Gottfried had made against him.

"I shall be glad to serve you," he said, extending his hand to Gottfried across the table. "Leave the arrangements to me and to Carrington's second."

"I am ashamed to tell you," said Gottfried uneasily, "that for the sake of secrecy he wishes his valet to act as second. Perhaps you will not care to confer with him."

"It does not matter," said Dierssen with a shrug; "I recognize the difficulties of the case."

After some delay, caused by the absence of Rex Carrington from home, Perkins called at the office of Heinrich Dierssen, and the arrangements were duly made. The place appointed for the meeting was on the beach beyond Redondo; and the time set, early in the morning, when there would be least danger of disturbance.

As Perkins returned home, his heart sank and his knees trembled and almost knocked together in the darkness.

"I 'm sure I don't know how this scrape will end," he muttered. "He may save his own neck from the gallows with his money, but I 'm not so sure about mine."

Suddenly he seemed struck with a happy thought. He slapped his knee and laughed softly to himself.

"I 'll do it," he muttered, as he entered the grounds of his master's house. "He 'll never resist sampling the new case of cham-

pagne that came to-day. He 'll be in a rage with me if he finds out I thought of it, but I 'll get out of it some way."

As the brief days of waiting passed, Gottfried could scarcely realize that he could be so beside himself with anger; but when he looked at the sweet, pure face of Constance, and thought of the life of a man like Rex Carrington, the blood leaped like fire through his veins and his hands clenched till he felt the nails in the flesh. However, he did not mean to slay his antagonist; but only to give him a wound that would teach him that Constance was not unprotected. To the skill in fencing that he possessed, he had added a certain practical knowledge of anatomy; so that he felt confident that he could inflict a blow that should be severe but not fatal.

In order to escape the danger of subsequent detection, Gottfried and his new friend did not go to Redondo Beach the evening before the day that had been set, but drove out before daybreak. In addition

to his duties as second, Dierssen was to act as surgeon; and he had provided himself with lint and bandages and a case of instruments.

The two men drove through the yet silent town and found the place on the beach that had been agreed upon, just as the light of day began to struggle through the heavy morning mists. The air was chill, and the sea, shrouded in fog, rolled heavily and monotonously on the beach. Dierssen looked at his watch and announced that they were a quarter of an hour ahead of time.

"Carrington probably came up last night and stopped at the hotel," said Gottfried; "so he will doubtless be on time."

"Yes, you may depend upon it that he has made himself comfortable," was the reply.

They spoke in German, Gottfried finding it a relief in his state of tense excitement.

Little by little the fog cleared, and the sun came out, silvering the surface of the sea, and falling with grateful warmth on the

stretch of wet sand where the friends impatiently waited.

As the time approached, Gottfried stood with his watch open in his hand. But the hour passed and his antagonist did not come. As moment after moment went by and he did not appear, Gottfried's impatience gave place to angry scorn.

"He is a coward, he is afraid to come," he muttered.

"It is just possible," said his cooler companion, "that he did not understand the exact place we were to meet. He may have stopped the other side of the town."

On this suggestion, he left Gottfried to keep watch at the appointed place, and drove through the town and along the beach, but without success. When he returned at last, Gottfried was still alone.

Another hour passed, and the patience of the friends had become exhausted.

"It is of no use to wait any longer," said Dierssen at last; "but as we drive through town we might stop at the hotel and inquire for him."

So it happened that while Gottfried sat in the buggy and waited for his friend, the latter went up to the hotel and sought the clerk.

"Is Mr. Rex Carrington here?" he inquired.

"Mr. Rex Carrington, of Los Angeles?" was the smiling rejoinder.

Dierssen assented.

"No, he is not. If he was expecting to come, he may be up to-day. Will you come again, or do you wish to leave any word for him?"

"Tell him," was the reply, "that Gottfried Jäger was here, and was surprised that he has not come."

As Heinrich Dierssen passed out, he found the long veranda facing the sea already occupied by the usual groups of young women in shirt-waists and sailor hats, and young men in flannel outing-suits, who looked up from their papers or stopped their chatter among themselves to stare a little curiously at his stalwart figure and handsome blond face. The beach, too, was beginning to show

the morning activities of bathers and fishing-parties; and the sleepy little town was waking to its customary holiday air.

The young man rejoined his companion in the buggy, and they drove back to Los Angeles.

On his return to his studio, Gottfried found a note from Perkins, saying that his master was out of town on imperative business and had been unable to keep the appointment of that morning. Gottfried sent a note to be delivered to Carrington on his return, stigmatizing him as a coward and declaring that he deserved to be shot down in the street. The wily Perkins, having unsealed and read the note, concealed it; and several days later explained to his master that the night before the appointed time the painter had sent apologies and withdrawn the challenge.

"I 'm going to see about this myself, Perkins," the irate young man exclaimed; "I believe, you coward, you made me drunk so I could n't keep my appointment." And in this surmise he was not mistaken.

VI

MOUNT LOWE

It was almost midsummer when Gottfried first seriously thought of taking a trip to Mount Lowe.

"I should like to stay two or three days and make a number of sketches," he said one evening as he sat in Mrs. Wilbur's sitting-room; "but I am afraid that I cannot afford more than a day at the Echo Mountain House. I could get material for half a dozen pictures in that time, and I think they would sell."

"But I don't like to have you go," said the girl; "you have just been away several weeks, you know."

Gottfried started, but instantly controlled himself.

"But why can't you go too, *mein Liebchen?*" he said. "We will make up a little

party. I will ask Heinrich Dierssen to go and take his mother to chaperon you. She cannot speak English, but you can talk German with her. She is the dearest old lady in the world. You know I do not consider you old, Mrs. Wilbur," he added, turning to the invalid who lay on the couch watching the two bright young faces with a smile.

"That will be lovely," cried Constance, with flushed cheeks and eyes bright with excitement. "But will Mrs. Dierssen go, and what shall I do about mamma?"

"I will be all right," said that lady emphatically. "I will ask Agnes Burroughs to look in once in a while, and you might ask Emma to go with you. She has not been well lately, and the trip would do her good."

"Poor Emma," said Constance; "I will ask her. I don't believe she ever gets an outing."

And so the matter was arranged.

It was a beautiful but warm afternoon when the little party of five left the Los Angeles station behind them and the train swept

out above the empty bed of the Los Angeles river and followed the curve of the road toward Pasadena. Long before they reached the town, Gottfried, pointing through the open window, showed them the Echo Mountain House perched half-way up the mountain-slope, that rose bare and brown in the sunlight.

"But, Gottfried," expostulated Constance in a tone of disappointment, "that does not look so very high."

"Thirty-five hundred feet," he replied. "Wait till we are at the foot of the Cable Incline; it will seem higher then."

They skirted the picturesque town of Pasadena, with its beautiful churches and handsome residences, and went on to Altadena, the mountain looming nearer and the hotel and the observatory a little farther up seeming to rise away from them and creep farther up the mountain-slope.

"I believe you are right, Gottfried," Constance admitted; and her disappointment began to give place to a slowly growing wonder.

"Have you made the Hartz-journey?" asked Heinrich, turning to Gottfried.

"Yes, a long time ago," was the reply. "The details are a little blurred in my memory; but I know that it verified the description of Heine's *Harzreise*, although even that is not fresh in my mind."

"I went last year with a party of students," Dierssen went on. "I imagine we won't do much climbing this trip."

"Only by cable and electricity," said Gottfried; "unless," he added laughing, "you want to take one of the saddle animals they advertise."

At Altadena they changed to the electric cars, Constance insisting upon sitting on the front seat with the milk-cans and baskets of freshly laundered clothes that were on their way to the Echo Mountain House.

"I want to get the best view possible," she explained.

She was in high spirits, and presented to Gottfried a new phase of her nature that was charming to him.

Soon they reached the little station at Rubio Cañon. They alighted in front of the pavilion, the road by which they had just come curving away to the left. To the right stretched Rubio Cañon, narrow and shut in with high, precipitous walls. In front of them rose the mountain, its rugged and steep incline marked by the double line of the cable; at its foot stood the White Chariot, arranged in three tiers of seats, and entered by steps that led up to it on either side of the track.

The passengers from the electric car crowded into their places, Gottfried and his party sitting in the highest division, and facing the cañon, the better to see the panorama that was to be unrolled before them.

The conductor, who was the same that had been with them on the electric car, stood in the front and explained to them the points of interest.

"The Great Cable Incline that connects Rubio Cañon with the summit of Echo Mountain is about two thirds of a mile in

length, and is without doubt the safest and most unique piece of railroading in the world. It has the remarkable inclination of from forty-eight to sixty degrees."

The car began to rise, and with a simultaneous impulse the party were on their feet. Emma Burroughs, however, sank down in sudden terror and covered her eyes with her hands.

Slowly and steadily the car swung up as though in mid-air, and the horizon widened, the scenery unfolding as the earth receded from them. To their right, the San Gabriel Valley stretched like a level sea, Pasadena glimmering faintly through a luminous mist that reached in the distant foreground the base of Mount Santiago, the summit of the mountain rising from it like an island in the sea. Above the horizon, bounded by sinuous mountain curves, peak after peak lifted its purple head as they rose higher and higher; while close at hand they were hemmed in by brown and rocky steeps that broke away at the left in the wild, half-hidden ravine of Rubio Cañon.

The voice of the conductor droned on, but they did not hear it. Gottfried was fastening in his memory a picture to be transferred to canvas; and the others drank in the glorious beauty of the scene with silent delight.

"It is wonderful," said Constance afterward, "to climb a mountain and see the horizon widen below. But you climb with your back to the greater part of the scenery and have to turn at intervals to get the effect; while we stood facing it all, and the scene changed with the swift movement of a panorama. The appearance of that succession of purple mountain-peaks was one of the most grandly beautiful phenomena I have ever seen."

At last they reached the summit, and stepped out at the entrance steps of the Echo Mountain House, a picturesque building with long verandas and a circular dome.

"The electric car starts up to Mount Lowe in a few minutes," said the conductor in his function of guide, "and will return

in time for dinner. You will just have time to go in and register."

The ascent of Mount Lowe proved more wonderful and beautiful than even the wild ride up the Cable Incline. To the right, the brown wall of the mountain rose rocky and precipitous; to the left, a succession of cañons looked down upon the valley, where Pasadena and Los Angeles lay, hidden in a mist that was like a violet sea; and beyond, the range of the Santa Monica Mountains lifted their summits against the sky, opalescent masses of a remarkable semi-translucence.

"It is a symphony in a minor key," said Constance, as she drank in the beauty of the soft, ethereal coloring.

"The colors of those mountains are like opals and moonstones," said Heinrich Dierssen.

Emma Burroughs and Mrs. Dierssen were sitting side by side in silent delight. Gottfried stood at the end of the car, transferring hasty lines to his sketch-book.

"*Wunderschön*," he murmured, "*wunderschön*."

"Yes," said Constance softly; "that is the only word that is worthy of it; wonderful and beautiful."

Past the cañon of Los Flores, or The Flowers, past Sugar-Loaf, Milard, and Grand Cañons, they swept in strange loops and curves that transcended the wonders of Tehachapi Pass. At one spot, they could count the track in seven places; at other times, they looked down from dizzy heights on sinuous trails no wider than the daring track by which they were outlined. As they ascended, the barrenness of the lower altitudes gave place to a growth of live-oak and what Heinrich Dierssen greeted joyfully as the "*Nadelholz*," or needle-bearing trees.

Gottfried put away his sketch-book in despair.

"I will climb up to-morrow morning and get the outlines," he said. "The color effects I can carry in my memory."

"Is this like Alpine scenery?" asked Constance, turning to Heinrich Dierssen.

"No," said the latter with decision; "these are not the Alpine effects at all. The colors are brilliant in Alpine scenery, like a Titian painting. This is colder, but more ethereal and more beautiful."

She had spoken to him in English and he had replied in German, so absorbed in admiration of the scenes through which they were passing that he had not noticed the unconscious transition from one language to another.

"Yes," said Constance; "I think this must be more like Arctic scenery; one could almost imagine those translucent violet mountains were glaciers and icebergs."

"It needs only the *aurora borealis* above them to make the illusion perfect," assented Dierssen.

The sun was just setting when they returned to the hotel, laden with beautiful specimens of the long green moss that covers the twigs and hangs from the branches of

the live-oaks. Even now the color effects of the scene were subdued, passing in imperceptible transitions from crimsons and violets to silver and gray.

After dinner the little group had become separated, and Gottfried and Constance sat together at the front of the long veranda, looking down into the blackness of the valley below. The night was moonless. A little below them, on the mountain-side, glimmered the white chalet, that had originally been the hotel. Above them towered the summit of Echo Mountain; on either side the slopes were dim in the darkness; while far below, in the fathomless gloom-filled valley, shone two constellations of lights, marking the sites of Pasadena and Los Angeles; the former of dazzling brightness, the latter, from its greater distance, piercing the darkness with a fainter brilliance.

There were several groups of guests in different parts of the veranda; but the seats immediately about them were unoccu-

pied. Gottfried leaned toward Constance and captured her hand.

"It seems as though there were just we two together in all the world," he said.

"And not in the world," she rejoined, "but above the world, with all its trivial round of daily life. Alone together," she added softly, pressing the hand that inclosed her own.

The next moment they had started forward with a simultaneous cry. A broad stream of light had bridged the darkness to the valley below, and brought out in a swift flash-picture a pretty cottage in a luminous circle, whose distinctness was intensified by the dense blackness above it.

"The search-light," said Gottfried, bending forward.

"And is that a house in Pasadena?" asked Constance.

"It must be," he replied.

The shaft of light turned upward toward the mountain, and played upon a peak that seemed suddenly to swim out of a sea of

darkness. Again and again the weird flash-pictures leapt to sudden and ephemeral life, only to sink again into the black oblivion of the night.

"They are like our lives," said Gottfried musingly; "a moment of light between the darkness of two eternities."

"But the peaks and the slopes and the cottages are there, even in the darkness," said Constance softly. "So it is with the deathless reality of love."

If Gottfried was tinged with the skepticism of German philosophy, nevertheless he liked to hear those words fall from her lips.

The light went out, and again the veil of darkness settled over them. A wagonette rattled up to the side door, and the voice of Heinrich Dierssen broke the stillness.

"Come up to the observatory," he said; "they say it 's a fine night to see Saturn."

"And where are the others?" asked Gottfried, as they rose to follow him.

"My mother and Miss Burroughs are in the wagonette," he replied.

A moment later they were seated, Constance occupying a high perch beside the driver; and the wagonette rattled rapidly over the winding road, the horses turning with trained agility the sharp, unexpected curves that threw the occupants of the wagonette out of their seats amid screams of laughter.

In the observatory, they climbed the ladder in the darkness, and as they looked through the great telescope, shouted questions into the deaf ear of the kindly old astronomer, who answered with more patience and wisdom than comprehension of their immediate needs.

On their return to the hotel, they stood at the back of the house while the cannon was fired, and listened to the echo flung from slope to slope, that sounded in its continuous reverberation like a heavy roll of thunder. It was a fitting salute to the day that had been so full of wonders and surprises.

"Will you walk up the mountain with me to-morrow?" asked Gottfried of Constance, as they stood in the hallway a moment before parting for the night.

"Will you be back in time for the Rubio Cañon trip?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, we can take that in the afternoon. We do not leave here till four."

"I should like to go," said Constance, "but I hope it will be cooler than it has been to-day."

"Don't decide then until to-morrow," he said; "it will make no difference to me, except that I should like to have your company, as always."

The last words were almost a whisper, and were accompanied by a pressure of the hand.

"Good-night, *mein Liebchen*," he added; "I would like a kiss, but there come Heinrich and Miss Burroughs."

"What have they done with Mrs. Diersen?" asked Constance; "and why is Emma blushing so? Do you know, Gottfried, I believe" — and she stopped with a laugh.

The next morning the little party assembled on the veranda before daybreak to watch the sunrise. The pageant began with a soft deepening of color on the distant hills and in the sky. Slowly the light spread along the horizon, peak after peak and slope after slope transformed to a golden glory while they were yet in shadow. The light drew nearer and nearer; and at length over the edge of a beetling height above them, the rim of the sun appeared, more than an hour after daylight shone on the most distant hills.

The morning was warm, with more of oppressive heat than is ever felt in the valley and plains below. The ladies, who had worn their heavy clothing, were very uncomfortable, and Constance hesitated to take the walk up the mountain with Gottfried. He did not urge it, and even insisted on her staying below in the comparative coolness of the shaded veranda. Heinrich volunteered to entertain the ladies in his absence, and he set off alone, promising to return for lunch

and go with them to Rubio Cañon in the afternoon.

The morning seemed to Constance of interminable length. They went down to the chalet, which was used for overflow when necessary, and sometimes for servants' quarters, but which was unoccupied now, during the dull season. They found it cooler than the hotel, and established themselves on the veranda for a comfortable chat. Constance noticed with a smile that Heinrich Dierssen had drawn a little apart with Emma Burroughs. For the first time, too, she thought that Emma Burroughs was almost pretty, with the flush of pleasure on her face and the unaccustomed sparkle in her eyes.

"I don't believe she is more than twenty-seven or eight, after all," she said to herself. "She must be at least ten years younger than her sister. Heinrich Dierssen is certainly older than Gottfried, and can be little if any younger than Emma. I don't see why it should n't be." And with the enthusiasm of her sex for match-making, Constance determined to help matters along.

The most obvious thing to do at present was to leave them to themselves; so Constance turned to Mrs. Dierssen and talked with her in imperfect German, asking her about those places in Germany that Gottfried had sometimes mentioned.

Thus the morning wore away. For some reason Constance had lost her buoyant spirits and felt vaguely regretful that she had not gone with Gottfried up the mountain. She was glad when Mrs. Dierssen declared it was time to go to lunch.

They went back to the hotel, and looked for Gottfried, but in vain. He was not on the veranda, nor in the lower vestibule, nor in the parlor above.

"He must be in his room," said Heinrich; "I will go and see."

But the door was locked, and there was no answer to his tap.

He returned to the group on the veranda, and here they waited some time longer; but Gottfried did not return. Constance was anxious and ill at ease; but she strove to

conceal her agitation. She laughed and jested in a merry way, but at intervals fell into abstracted silence. Heinrich began to suspect there was some cause for her anxiety, and speculated idly as to its nature.

At last, at the young man's suggestion, they went to the dining-room, thinking Gottfried would join them there on his return. But they finished lunch, and still he had not come. The White Chariot was ready to start down the Incline for the trip to Rubio Cañon.

"You had better go," Constance said to the others. "I will stay here till he returns." After a moment's demur they left her.

The White Chariot swept down the Incline with its merry, laughing load of passengers; and Constance turned back into the vestibule with an undefined fear in her heart. She went directly to the office and spoke to the clerk.

"Have you seen Mr. Jäger?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "He went back to Los Angeles this morning."

Constance paled, but controlled herself with an effort.

"Did he leave any word?" she asked.

"No," was the answer. "He merely asked for his bill; and when he had settled it, went out to the Chariot and got in, just as it was starting down for the morning train. By the way," he added, drawing out a roll of papers, "the bell-boy found these in his room after he left. Perhaps you will be kind enough to return them to him."

Mechanically Constance took the roll he handed to her, and walked slowly up to her room. When she had closed the door behind her, she unrolled the papers and looked at them. They were evidently the sketches he had made on the mountain that morning.

An hour later, the party to Rubio Cañon returned. Constance met them quietly, and told them that Gottfried had been unexpectedly called away on the morning train and had left word with the clerk for them. She choked a little over the last words, but could not resist the loving deception. Hein-

rich looked at her keenly, and saw that his suspicions of the morning had not been unfounded; but he made no comment on her explanation, simply translating it to his mother in response to her inquiries.

The return to Los Angeles was silent or broken by forced conversation, all reference to the unaccountable defection of their companion being carefully avoided. Constance felt herself continually on the point of tears, and could hardly trust her voice to answer the remarks addressed to her. Heinrich Dierssen and Emma Burroughs were absorbed in each other in a quiet way; and Mrs. Dierssen, seeing the girl's distress, did not trouble her with much attempt at conversation.

While Constance was crying herself to sleep that night, Rex Carrington, dispensing with the somewhat officious ministrations of Perkins, paced his study with corrugated brow and hands clasped behind him.

He stopped in front of the Madonna, and stood looking at it. Gottfried had tried in

vain to regain possession of the picture, having offered him twice what he had paid for it, though the price would have left him without means of buying his next meal. But Rex Carrington had laughed at his overtures and sent him scornful replies.

Now, as the young man gazed at the pictured face, he realized as never before the strange power it had over him. All the best and noblest part of his nature had been touched to life by the revelation. Yet he could not understand himself.

"What a fool I am," he muttered, "to be in love with a picture. And such love! I never knew the meaning of the word before. I feel as though I could carry that girl in my arms to the ends of the earth; and I could no more harm her than I could harm an angel. What would my mother think if she knew I wanted to marry her, — my mother, who is the daughter of an earl? But she is fit to be a countess herself," he went on, letting his eyes rest on the pictured face. "It is strange I cannot find her. And it

is strange that fool of an artist does not succeed in meeting me. We are even now at least, for it was he that failed at the rendezvous last week, and I have cast the imputation of coward in his teeth."

He stopped again in front of the picture, and, looking closely at the name scrawled across the lower corner, gave a start of surprise.

"Gottfried Jäger!" he exclaimed. "It is strange I never thought of it before. It is easy enough to translate. Gottfried Jäger; how the deuce did the fellow get that name?"

He stared at the words with incredulous wonder.

"It is a remarkable coincidence," he muttered, and fell to pacing the floor again.

VII

CLOUDS

It was early in the afternoon that Constance turned up Adams Street on her way to the home of little Lillian Ferris, one of her music pupils. She was dressed in a dainty summer gown of pink and white, but, mindful of the afternoon sea breeze, she carried her winter cape over her arm. She did not know what a pretty picture she made; and as she hurried along her thoughts were anxious and unhappy, for she had not seen Gottfried since he left them at Echo Mountain. She had almost been tempted to make a confidante of Mrs. Dierssen, for she longed for comfort and counsel; but she felt that the secret belonged to Gottfried, and whatever it might be, it was her duty to guard it for him. Her mother was as much disturbed as Constance over the mystery that seemed

to surround Gottfried's life. She almost regretted that she had not opposed the courtship in the beginning; but she could not help liking and trusting Gottfried herself, and she knew that now her daughter's happiness was irrevocably bound up in him. It happened, therefore, that his absence was scarcely ever commented upon between them, each wishing to spare the other the pain of discussing the subject.

Constance had just passed the house in which Gottfried lived, and the drawn blinds of the studio window had seemed in some mysterious way to shut him out of her life. Where he passed his time and what he did in those long days away from her she had tried in vain to imagine. Not by the slightest reference or lapse of caution had he ever given her a glimpse into those closed chapters of his life.

As she continued her walk she left behind her the pretty cottages with their trim little gardens, and turning on a broad street, passed a succession of beautiful residences,

most of them of either Renaissance or Gothic architecture. She turned in at the gate of a spacious house built in Queen Anne style, and a moment later was in the music-room with her little pupil.

It was with difficulty that she could concentrate her mind upon the monotonous round of scales and exercises, and the pretty spoiled child seemed more careless and trying than usual. The ordeal was over at last, however, and she stood by the piano drawing on her gloves, when Miss Ferris, her pupil's sister, entered the room. She was a handsome girl, with a cold, proud face, and an air of almost disdainful hauteur. She nodded carelessly to Constance as she crossed the room.

"Did you see my card-case, Lillian?" she said to her little sister; "I thought I left it on the piano."

"Yes, it is here," said the child, picking it up and holding it out to her.

As Miss Ferris stepped forward to take it, passing in front of Constance to do so,

something fell at her feet. It was the locket that Gottfried had given Constance. A link of the chain had parted, and in falling the locket had opened, and lay with the portrait exposed to view. Miss Ferris glanced down, and, with a cry of surprise, stooped swiftly and lifted the trinket in her hand.

"Is this your property, Miss Wilbur?" she asked coldly.

"Thank you, yes," said Constance, holding out her hand for the locket.

Miss Ferris did not notice the gesture, but continued looking at the portrait.

"May I take the liberty of inquiring who this is?" she asked, raising her scornful eyes to Constance's face.

"Certainly," said Constance with quiet dignity; "it is my fiancé."

Miss Ferris laughed; a bitter, mocking laugh that vibrated painfully on her listener's ears.

"So that is what he tells you," she said; "and it is presumably with you he spends so much of the time he denies his friends."

She handed back the locket and turned to leave the room. Constance stopped her with an imperative gesture.

"Miss Ferris," she said, steadying her voice with an effort, "will you be kind enough to explain the meaning of your words?"

"Certainly, since you wish it," was the cold reply. "The gentleman whose portrait you wear, is engaged to a lady of position and wealth. He is deceiving you — unless, perhaps, you are deceiving me."

The face of Constance had paled, but flushed deeply at the insult of the concluding words.

"It is not true," she cried with passionate vehemence; "I know it is not true."

"As you wish," said Miss Ferris icily; "I suppose, of course, you wear his ring."

As she spoke, she glanced from the little gloved hands to the indignant face. The eyes of Constance faltered and fell.

"Ah!" said Miss Ferris quietly, "I see you do not. It is as I thought."

Again she turned to leave the room, and again Constance detained her.

"Miss Ferris," she said, "you must hear me. He gave me no ring because he has a prejudice, a superstition, if you like, against the custom. He gave me the locket instead."

"And you believe in his superstition?" asked Miss Ferris with contemptuous scorn. "Perhaps you will be glad for me to tell you that he reserves the ring for his true fiancée."

As she spoke, she twisted carelessly a handsome solitaire diamond that gleamed on her finger. Constance, in her agitation, did not notice the movement. With an effort, she controlled herself and gathered up her music from the piano. Little Lillian, who had annoyed her so during the lesson hour, had slipped around by her side and seized her hand.

"Don't mind her," she said, looking at her sister spitefully; "she's a cross old thing, anyway."

But the two girls stood facing each other, unconscious of the presence of the child. In the ears of Constance the words of the other kept repeating themselves.

"It is not true," she said again; "you cannot make me believe it is true." And some way, she never knew exactly how, she got out of the room and out of the house, into the open air.

She hurried along the street, her thoughts in a confused whirl. Gottfried was certainly true to her, she assured herself over and over. But even as she said the words she passed his studio with its closed blinds, and her heart sank with vague terror. What was the mystery that surrounded his life? How did he pass the long hours away from her? Was it indeed Miss Ferris or one of her friends that drew him away from her, and could he be deceiving her? But her reason came to the aid of her heart in protest against the thought. Miss Ferris, with her family, and her wealth and her pride, would scorn such a suitor as a poor and unknown

artist, and so would any woman of her set. It must be there was some remarkable resemblance that was playing a trick of mistaken identity. Why had she not asked Miss Ferris the name of the man to whom she referred? That might have explained all. And yet, could she herself ever mistake another face for Gottfried's? Surely there was no other like it in the world, no other so dreamy and handsome and good.

It had turned suddenly cold with the afternoon wind, and she threw her heavy wrap over her shoulders as she hurried along. A dozen thoughts surged wildly through her brain; but through them all came the relentless recollection that she had another lesson to give that afternoon. For the moment she had forgotten it, and started automatically toward home. Now she turned back, and walked faster to make good the time she had lost.

An hour later, as she came out again on the street, closing the gate behind her, she almost fell into the arms of Gottfried. She

gave a little cry of delight, and held out both her hands to him.

"Gottfried, Gottfried!" she said, lifting her eyes to him pleadingly.

"Why, *mein Liebchen*, what is the matter?" he exclaimed; for tears trembled on the long lashes.

"You are not — you are — why did you give me a locket instead of a ring?" she burst out incoherently.

An expression of pain crossed his face.

"Come, *meine Liebste*, we cannot talk on the street," he said gently. "Come back to my studio."

It did not occur to her that there was anything unconventional in stopping with him at the studio. She had gone there day after day to pose for the Madonna and to sit for the portrait; so she allowed him to draw her hand through his arm, and they passed up the street in silence together. Gottfried could feel the little hand on his arm tremble, and he longed to clasp it in his; but even on the quiet street they were

traversing there were occasional passers, and at intervals suburban street-cars swept by with a whir and a clang of bells.

They entered the house of Mrs. Flannigan, and Gottfried opened the door of the studio. Constance followed him into the room and glanced about her. There was dust on tables and chairs; and some sketches that had been pinned to the wall lay scattered on the floor. The portrait of Constance stood on the easel opposite the closed door of an inner room, and smiled at them. The girl sank down in the chair in which she had sat for the picture and burst into tears.

Gottfried stood by, at a loss to understand the meaning of it all, and waiting for Constance to speak. But she paid no heed to him and continued to sob. At length he crossed the room and tried to draw her hands from her eyes.

"What is it, *mein Liebchen?*" he said tenderly. "Won't you tell me?"

She drew her hands from his and raised

her eyes to his face. Lifting the locket from her breast, she held it up toward him.

"To whom did you give the ring that you would not give to me?" she asked slowly. In her heart she believed him true to her, but she wanted to test him by the suddenness of the attack.

His face flushed, and a momentary anger flashed in his eyes.

"I have given no ring," he said. "I have given a present to no woman but you."

"And do you not know Miss Ferris, of No. — Adams Street?" she continued.

"No," he returned, "I never heard of her."

His eyes looked frankly in hers, and she could no longer doubt him.

She rose and held out her hands to him.

"Forgive me," she said simply.

For answer he drew her into his arms.

"But tell me, *mein Liebchen*," he said a moment later, "why you should have doubted me, even for a moment."

"Miss Ferris is the sister of one of my

pupils," Constance explained. "She told me you were deceiving me; that you were engaged to a girl of position and wealth. She thought she recognized your portrait in the locket."

As she spoke, Gottfried had turned white, and a vague horror had crept into his face.

"And I have been so worried about you," continued Constance, who had laid her cheek on his shoulder and did not see his face, "ever since you left us so suddenly at Echo Mountain. And you have been away so long this time, you know."

Gottfried started back and his arms fell away from her.

"God forgive me!" he cried, staggering against the wall and covering his face with his hands. "I did not dream it was so bad as this."

"What is it?" cried the girl in terror, running to him and clinging to his arm. "It is your turn to tell me your troubles. Tell me, and let me share them with you."

"*Ach! mein Liebchen*," he said, looking down at her and stroking her cheek; "I cannot tell you; it is beyond my power; and, wretch that I am, I am not strong enough to give you up."

"No," she said solemnly; "I know you cannot give me up; and I thank God for it."

Again he drew her into his arms and kissed her tenderly, but without passion.

"I cannot marry you, *mein Liebchen*," he said, "with a cloud on my life. But neither can I give up your love. You will wait for me a little longer, and I will not rest until I have made myself master of my fate."

Constance looked up bravely and smiled through her tears.

"And now," she said, "you will come home with me and have some tea and toast with us. I am not willing to lose you, even for a little while, this evening."

"Faith, and I thought yez was niver comin' again at all, Mr. Gottfried," said the voice of Mrs. Flannigan as they stepped

into the hall. "And sure it 's good for sore eyes is the sight of yez."

Gottfried made a laughing rejoinder and led the way out on the street.

Mrs. Wilbur smiled as she saw the two coming arm-in-arm through the gate. She had been lying on her lounge in the bay-window and watching for Constance for more than an hour.

That evening Constance returned to Gottfried the Mount Lowe sketches that he had feared were lost.

"I am sorry I did not get Rubio Cañon," he said, as he glanced over them. "If I had, I could have taken an order to-day."

It was the only comment he made on his disappearance; but as he stood with her in the hallway at parting, he referred again to the ring.

"You will not let it trouble you, *mein Liebchen?*" he said. "You will believe in me, whatever they say?"

And she gave him the assurance he desired.

VIII

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE

THE next day, Gottfried, attired scrupulously in his best, bent his way toward Adams Street. He had wanted to go to see Miss Ferris early in the morning, so excited was he over the recital of Constance; but he reflected that he would have more chance of being received if he should wait till afternoon. He had therefore spent the morning in touching up the Mount Lowe sketches, finding it difficult, however, to concentrate his attention upon his work. He had not dined at the little coffee-house where he was accustomed to meet Heinrich Dierssen at noon, for he wanted to avoid his friend and the uncomfortable questions he would undoubtedly ask him, till after the momentous interview; but he had wandered into a little up-town restaurant, and when he had fin-

ished his lunch, had occupied the interval of waiting in strolling about the streets. It was therefore about four o'clock when he rang the bell at the Ferris mansion.

As the servant opened the door, he drew out his card, on which was inscribed the announcement: *Gottfried Jäger, Landscape and Portrait Painter. Instructions given from* 10 *to* 12 *and* 2 *to* 4 *daily.* To his surprise the man spoke a respectful word of recognition, and, opening the door, led the way into the drawing-room.

"Miss Ferris has been expecting you all day, sir," he said, as he retired.

Gottfried sat down bewildered and waited for developments.

The train of his thoughts was suddenly disturbed. A pretty blonde child had parted the portières at the back of the room and was looking at him roguishly.

"Did you bring me the box of bonbons?" she asked. "If you did, give them to me quick, before any one comes and says I can't have them. I 'm going to put them in

Angelica's trunk — Angelica 's my Paris doll, you know — and eat them all myself. Why don't you bring them?" she added, stamping her little foot.

"I 'm sorry," said Gottfried, laughing in spite of his perplexity, "but you 'll have to excuse me this time ; I did n't bring them."

"Then I won't kiss you, and you can't catch me if you try," she exclaimed.

With this parting shot, she drew the curtains and he was left alone.

He looked about him curiously. He was sure that he had never seen the room before. It was richly furnished with Oriental carpets and tapestries, and marbles and bronzes from Italy. Suddenly he started, for among the paintings that adorned the walls, he recognized a little water-color of his own. It was a view of the Golden Gate that he had intended placing in the store of Robins Brothers for sale some time before. One day he had missed it from his studio ; and after a severe strain of memory, distinctly recollected starting out to the dealers' with

it; but upon inquiry at the store, he was told that it had never been received. Thinking there was a possibility of mistake now, he rose, and, crossing the room, scrutinized the picture closely. The name of Gottfried Jäger was written across the corner, as he had thought it would be.

At this moment the servant reëntered the room.

"Miss Ferris is out driving, sir," he said.

"Then I will come again," said Gottfried, rising.

The servant bowed and seemed to expect some further message. Gottfried thought a moment before he spoke. It was Saturday, and it would hardly do to call on Sunday. It was with an effort that he checked his impatience to a suitable reply.

"Tell her," he said, "that I will come Monday morning at eleven."

He glanced at the man's face, but it was decorous and impassive. Whatever he thought, he understood the propriety of his position too well to betray it to his superiors.

As Gottfried walked rapidly down the broad street, he came suddenly upon Heinrich Dierssen.

"Hello!" ejaculated the latter, stopping and holding out his hand. "Where have you been so long?"

Gottfried made an evasive answer as he gripped his friend's hand.

"How's your affair with the Figueroa swell coming on?" asked Heinrich jocularly.

"Let me see; what is the second date set? Some time next week, is n't it?" inquired Gottfried.

"Look here, Gottfried," exclaimed Dierssen, almost angrily; "what are you trying to play your Rip Van Winkle trick on me for? It was last week, and you know it; and your confounded disappearance has given that fellow a chance to call you — what is your American word? — a cad."

Gottfried paled, but tried to answer nonchalantly.

"Don't get angry, Heinrich," he said;

"you might excuse a fellow for a slip of memory when he has as much on his mind as I have."

Dierssen looked at him curiously. He wondered more than ever what the mysterious business could be that took him away so suddenly.

"But what are you going to do about the appointment?" he asked.

Gottfried shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose we must set another date," he replied. "And, Heinrich," he added more seriously, laying his hand on his friend's arm, "when I am away, if I should be called away at any time, you will guard Constance for me — you will not let him meet her" — his voice broke, and he could not finish his sentence.

Dierssen sought his hand and gripped it in his own.

"She will be safe," he said; "you need not fear for her."

"I would trust *mein Liebchen* anywhere," said Gottfried, "as far as her loyalty and

truth are concerned; but I will not have her annoyed, I will not have her know about this man."

"I will stand between them," said Heinrich; "you need not be afraid. But you are not thinking of going away, are you?" he added anxiously.

"No," said Gottfried, a little uncertainly, "I am not thinking of it; but I don't know" —

He left the sentence uncompleted, and again Heinrich looked at him curiously. Gottfried noticed the glance and flushed.

"I must go to the studio," he said; "I have a picture to finish."

He turned off at the corner, looking back with an "*Auf Wiedersehen*," to cover the abruptness of his departure.

Heinrich had walked but a few blocks farther, when he overtook Constance Wilbur, returning home from her round of lessons.

He slackened his pace to keep step with her, and began talking of trivial things.

But all the while his thoughts were busy with Gottfried; his mysterious business, his solicitude about Constance, and the unfinished affair with Rex Carrington. He stole sidelong glances at the profile of the face beside him, and noted again the beauty of outline and coloring and the sweetness and purity of expression.

"No wonder Gottfried loves her," he thought, "for he is an artist."

Then he thought of a face that was not beautiful, and yet could thrill him as no other face had ever done. At the thought, he inquired after Miss Burroughs.

"Come up this evening with Gottfried," said Constance, smiling, "and I will ask her in, and Gottfried shall make us one of his rarebits."

Accordingly, Heinrich Dierssen stopped that evening at Gottfried's studio, only to find it deserted.

"Sure, and I have n't seen him since he wint out this afternoon," Mrs. Flannigan replied to his inquiries; "and it 's as un-

certain as the weather in the spring-time he is. But as long as he pays his rint, what 's that to me, if he is n't here half the time? And I ask no questions, and niver a word does he tell me where he goes. Faith, and his pupils are all lavin' him, and a shame it is, with him such a foine painter."

"If he comes back this evening," said Heinrich as he turned away, "tell him to come up to Miss Wilbur's; we are expecting him."

Ten minutes later he was trying to excuse Gottfried to Constance. When the girl saw he was alone, she had turned white and detained him in the hall to question him.

"When did you see him last?" she asked.

"He walked with me on the street a few blocks this afternoon," said Heinrich.

"And where did he go?" persisted Constance. "To his studio?"

"Yes," the young man replied. "He seemed to be in a hurry; he said he had a picture to finish."

"Did he say anything about going away?" asked Constance anxiously.

"Well, yes," admitted Heinrich, afraid of saying too much. "He said he had business that might call him away suddenly at any time. But he did not expect to go away at present."

"In that case," said Constance quietly, "he will probably come later."

As they entered the room, Emma Burroughs blushed prettily, and for a moment Heinrich forgot Gottfried and Constance in his pleasure at seeing her. Constance was amazed at the transformation that had taken place in the little dressmaker. The lines were gone from her face and the dull look from her eyes. She wore a pretty waist of pale silk, and her blond hair was dressed in the latest mode. But perhaps it was not so much the change of dress as the beginning of a new happiness that made her look ten years younger than when Constance first saw her.

Mrs. Wilbur looked up in surprise when she saw that Heinrich was alone.

"Where is Gottfried?" she asked, and the young man thought he detected the same shadow on her face that had clouded the girl's on his arrival.

"He was not at the studio, mamma," the girl interposed hastily. "Mr. Dierssen left word for him to come up if he returned."

They passed the evening playing bézique, Heinrich drawing a table up to the invalid's couch that she might participate in the game. Constance strained her ears at the sound of every footstep on the sidewalk; but the welcome click of the gate-latch did not follow, nor the familiar tread up the little paved walk. The evening passed, and Gottfried did not come. Constance referred to him but once, and then indirectly. As she served Russian tea and wafers, she remarked that she was sorry Hamlet had been left out of the play, the rarebit out of the feast.

Late that night Heinrich Dierssen sat in his little office, as yet unvisited by patients, and pored over lengthy German medical

treatises; but he did not find what he sought.

"If there is a mystery about Gottfried Jäger's life," he soliloquized, as he closed with a bang the heavy tome he had been reading, "I am going to solve it. When he turns up again, I will not lose sight of him, but will follow him to the ends of the earth, if need be. It is a shame for a man with a mystery in his life to make a girl like Constance Wilbur love him and fret out her heart over him. What if it was little Emma?" and involuntarily his hands clenched at the thought.

It was a long time before he found opportunity to put into effect his determination concerning Gottfried; for weeks passed and nothing was seen of the painter. The dust settled thicker on the tables and chairs in the studio, which Mrs. Flannigan was especially forbidden to disturb with her iconoclastic duster and broom; and the unfinished portrait on the easel smiled with the sweet, wondering eyes of youth on the unac-

customed disorder of the deserted place. Cobwebs traced themselves about the corners and hung in filmy festoons from the ceiling. The plant on the window-sill Mrs. Flannigan did not have the heart to leave untended, and had removed to her own rooms. The blind was drawn and hung like a curtain of mystery before the eyes of Constance as she passed.

One by one his pupils fell away from him, leaving word with Mrs. Flannigan that they had found another teacher. Orders for work he had taken were countermanded, and a miscellaneous collection of mail lay on his writing-desk, unopened and covered with dust.

Once, nearly a month after his disappearance, Heinrich would have sworn that he saw him on a bicycle, racing with half a dozen "scorchers" on the road to Santa Monica; but he knew that Gottfried did not ride. In his anxiety for his friend and his indignation over the ill-suppressed unhappiness of Constance, he had entertained

wild thoughts of referring the matter to the police; but he shrank from exposing his friend to publicity, and he felt that Constance would oppose any action unsanctioned by Gottfried himself.

So the days passed into weeks, and the summer began to wane. Constance had grown listless and pale, and the curves of her cheeks had thinned, bringing out the prominence of the wide brow and the little pointed chin, till the face wore more than its usual semblance to the shape of a heart. Even Heinrich Dierssen noticed it, and when he saw her muttered under his breath, "*Das arme Herz.*"

IX

AVALON

GOTTFRIED awoke with the thought of the unfinished portrait in his mind, and opened his eyes, eager to get to work. Then he opened them wider and stared about him in astonishment. Instead of his bed-room, with the door open into the studio so that he could see the pictured face of Constance in his first moment of consciousness, he gazed upon a strange interior, with which he was entirely unfamiliar. He was certainly in a tent, for the walls were canvas, and so thin that he could hear the murmur of voices in an adjoining room. The place was bare, furnished only with two double beds, a bureau, a washstand, and two or three chairs. On the bureau stood a tallow candle and several empty champagne bottles. His satchel stood open in the middle of the

floor, and his clothing and toilet articles were scattered about the room. Outside he heard a steamer whistle, and the beat of the surf on the shore.

"What in the name of heaven am I doing here?" he exclaimed. "And where am I, anyway?" he added, wonderingly.

Surely it was only last night he had held the heart-face in his hands and kissed the little pointed chin as Constance stood with him at the doorway; the night he had come back to her after their trip to Echo Mountain. Surely it was only last night he had added to the face on the canvas the luminous expression that had flashed into the living face at that blissful moment. It was only last night he had gone to bed with the thought that he would see the wonderful new beauty of the canvas radiating its love on him when he first opened his eyes, and thinking thus had fallen asleep and dreamed of her as the Madonna, God pity him, with the child in her arms.

And now — the bare room, the canvas

walls, the murmured voices, and the inexplicable sound of the sea!

He jumped up, and, dragging a chair in front of the door, from whose lock hung the long wooden tag of a key, with a painted number, he sprang up and looked through the open transom over the door. He drew in his breath with an involuntary exclamation of delight. The scene he looked upon was picturesque and beautiful in the extreme. Curved crescent-like was a lovely bay, that formed almost a perfect semicircle, with high bluffs jutting out at the points. The shore-line could not have been more than a mile in extent, and was fringed with hotels, pretty villas, and open bazaars. On either side, and, presumably, back of him, rose hills of a golden brown, the color modified by low brush and cactus. Already there were bathers in the surf, and the wharf was crowded with people. A pretty little vessel was evidently making ready to leave port, its decks already filling with passengers, who were nodding and waving their

handkerchiefs to friends on shore. The name of the steamer caught his eye — *Hermosa.* He had heard it before, he was sure; but he could not remember in what connection. On the blue water, near the pebbly shore, lay a number of little boats, and a small steam-yacht was anchored by the bath-house. Beyond it all, melting imperceptibly into the deep blue of the sky, was the illimitable stretch of sea.

He turned away at last, and proceeded to make his toilet in a leisurely manner, listening to the conversation on the other side of the canvas with the hope of learning his locality.

As he carefully adjusted his tie in front of the glass, he pushed the empty bottles aside impatiently.

"Must have been left by my predecessor," he muttered; "I 'm sure my purse would n't stand four bottles of champagne."

The conversation of his unknown neighbors had so far been confined to plans for the day's fishing, but suddenly it took a new turn.

"Hurry up, old fellow, and get ready for breakfast," said one voice. "They won't have a thing at the hotel fit to eat if you wait much longer. The perennial yellow-tail will be cold, and I don't care for cold fish."

"But it 's beastly early," yawned the other voice. "Nevertheless, I suppose I must yield to the inevitable, you standing, as usual, for the inevitable." And there was another sound of springs and thud of feet, followed by sundry splashings, and scraping of chairs, and snapping of the locks of valises.

Gottfried conceived a brilliant idea. He would wait till the men came out, and follow them to the "hotel," where it was evidently the proper thing to breakfast. He would leave it to chance to discover where he was, without betraying his mysterious ignorance, and would determine his course of action to suit the circumstances.

Accordingly, he finished his toilet, and occupied the time of waiting by ransacking his valise for his sketch-book, as he wanted

to take away with him a picture of the place, to elaborate into a painting at his leisure. But to his astonishment he found no sketch-book, and no trace of artist's materials.

"What possessed me to come to a place like this without them?" he muttered. "Poor little Constance, how can I ever explain things to her? She will pass my window this morning, and look for me in vain. And how do I know I am not at the antipodes? *Mein Gott!*" he burst out suddenly, "if I have n't seen a curve like that bay somewhere in a picture of Naples. A pretty fix I 'm in if I 've landed in Europe with only twenty-five dollars in my pockets." For that was all the cash that had rewarded his search through his various effects.

At that moment the door in the adjoining room opened, and he hastened out just in time to encounter two young men on the narrow board walk in front of his door.

"Hello, old chap!" one of them exclaimed, familiarly, "you look rather seedy

this morning. Too much champagne, eh?" which seemed very unjust to Gottfried, in view of the fact that neither his purse nor his inclination permitted him to indulge in anything stronger than an occasional glass of beer.

"Oh! I'm all right," he said, with assumed indifference. "The bay looks inviting this morning, does n't it?" he added, tentatively.

"Yes, I wish you did n't have to go back to-day," one of the young men rejoined. "It 's too bad to miss the fishing, especially such an angler as you."

Gottfried flushed a little resentfully. If he was a poor fisherman, it was not pleasant to have the fact cast in one's face in that sarcastic manner. But the man continued, enthusiastically.

"That haul of yours yesterday was the biggest one made this summer, so I heard," he said.

By this time they had reached the hotel. Gottfried looked for the name, and saw it

was the Grand View. The words brought no association of ideas to his mind. He followed his companions into the dining-room, and sat down with them at the table. This seemed to be the usual thing, for there was no evidence of surprise. Several guests at other tables bowed to him, and he returned the salutation, although he had not the faintest recollection of their faces.

"Got your traps packed?" said one of his companions. "The steamer starts in half an hour, you know."

"No," Gottfried replied, "but I can throw them together in five minutes."

He wondered uneasily where he was expected to go, and if he had enough money to buy his ticket.

"Well," said one of the men, as they rose from the table some fifteen minutes later, "we 'll see you in Los Angeles when we get back from Catalina. Glad to have met you," and he held out his hand.

Gottfried took it with a sigh of relief. He was not far from home, after all; only

a few hours' ride on the steamer. He had always wanted to visit Catalina Island, but had never felt that he could afford the trip. However, he determined, now that he was here, that he would remain over another day, and make some sketches before he left. He kept his own counsel, however, and it was with a sense of relief that he saw his two companions row out on the Bay of Avalon. He had been in constant dread of betraying in their presence his inexplicable ignorance, and dared not accompany them on their fishing excursion; for whatever he might do in the irresponsible condition he had evidently been in the day before, he knew that in ordinary circumstances he would do anything but distinguish himself as an angler.

He sat down on the veranda of the hotel and felt in his pocket for his meerschaum. It was not there, but his search was rewarded by the discovery of a cigar of the finest brand. He was surprised, for he never smoked cigars. He put it back in his pocket and sat in ruminative silence. A

merry party came out of the door with lunch-baskets and fishing-reels.

"It 's a lovely day to go around the island," one of them remarked.

"Is that the yacht by the bath-house?" asked a young lady in glasses.

"Yes," was the reply; "did you bring your sketch-book?"

The girl nodded, and Gottfried was seized with a sudden desire to take the trip and make sketches too; but he remembered in despair that he had no materials with him. It was too early for the stores to open, and the yacht would start in a few minutes. He recollected, however, a pad of writing-paper and some pencils in his satchel, and he dashed down to the tent to get them.

As he returned, he was met at the door by the proprietor of the hotel. The steamer was just leaving the wharf.

"I thought you were going back this morning," the man said in surprise.

"I decided to remain over and take the trip around the island," Gottfried replied carelessly.

"But you went around the island Saturday," exclaimed the man.

Gottfried started, but immediately recovered himself.

"I want to go again and make some sketches," he said.

"By the way," the landlord said, as he turned to reënter the hotel, "you can have a room in the house now, if you care to change. Some parties went away this morning."

"I won't bother now," said Gottfried; "the tent 's good enough." And he picked up his overcoat and went down to the yacht.

The boat steamed slowly out of the bay, the curved shore-line, fringed with the picturesque villas and white tents of Avalon set against a background of rugged brown hills, receding in the distance.

Gottfried sat on the deck, making rapid outlines on the writing-paper he had brought with him.

"Why," said a soft voice at his side, "I did not know you could sketch."

He looked up and smiled into a pair of bright eyes that were gazing at him through glasses. He noticed that the face under the sailor hat was young and softly curved. The girl seemed to know him, after the manner of seaside acquaintance, for she spoke without hesitation.

"I was stupid enough not to bring my sketching materials," he rejoined; "but I have resorted to these in desperation."

"Let me share mine with you," she said, drawing several sheets from her portfolio, and extracting a pencil from her case. "I am sure you will make better use of them than I can," she added, as he accepted the proffer with a word of protest.

Notwithstanding Gottfried's uneasiness and sense of being adrift in the sea of events, he thoroughly enjoyed the day's trip. A continued panorama of picturesque surprises was unrolled before them. The island, of volcanic origin, showed them always its steep, brown heights, dotted here and there with shrubs and stunted trees, and

covered with cactus. Occasionally, there was a little pebble beach, or a cove large enough for a house or two; but always behind them were the wild, bare bluffs. In some places the rocks rose like walls and battlements, stained with rich hues of green and crimson and rose. They passed the island of Seal Rocks, and heard the hoarse cries of its clumsy denizens as they came out to warm themselves in the sun. Just at noon they rounded a cape of magnificently colored walls and turrets of solid rock, and came into the harbor of Catalina Bay. Here, on a little stretch of level ground, the largest in the island, save the site of Avalon, they were to take lunch.

The lady in glasses looked at Gottfried and laughed.

"You are an example of the improvidence of man," she said. "I see that you forgot not only your sketching materials, but your lunch as well. You must join our party."

The others seconded her invitation, insisting that he was entitled to a share, as it all

came from the hotel. Accordingly he landed with them, and assisted in finding a spot on the hillside free of cactus, where they spread out their lunch. It was a merry party, notwithstanding the fact that there had been no formal introductions and the names of several were unknown to the others. Gottfried learned, however, that his friend in glasses was Miss Fay, of San Diego.

In the afternoon, as Gottfried sat on the deck, watching the fishers who were drawing in large yellow-tails, that fell struggling over the side of the boat, one of the anglers turned and spoke to him.

"You can get a room at the Metropole now," he said; "we 're not much more than half full since the steamer left this morning. It was a beastly shame you had to go to another hotel."

"That 's all right," said Gottfried cautiously; "I 'm going back to Los Angeles to-morrow."

"Strange the way the season closes here," continued the first speaker. "By next week

the hotels will all be closed; and as for the camping tourists, they will fold their tents like the Arabs and steal away as suddenly, if not so silently."

As they neared the shore in the evening, having made the circuit of sixty miles about the island, and Avalon came again into view, half-shrouded in twilight, Gottfried hastily added the finishing touches to the sketch he had commenced in the morning.

A few moments later, when they stepped from the gang-plank to the shore, Miss Fay turned to Gottfried.

"Are you going up to the post-office?" she said. "If so, will you ask for me, Stella Fay?"

"With pleasure," said Gottfried; and as the rest of the party went up to the hotel, he turned down the main street, wondering where the post-office was. Instinctively he followed a stream of people up a side street, and soon found himself standing in a line before the post-office window, which opened directly on the street.

As the man in front of him turned away, and he stepped up to the window, the clerk shook his head.

"Nothing for you this evening," he said.

"Anything for Miss Stella Fay?" asked Gottfried, restraining his surprise.

The clerk handed out a paper, and as Gottfried turned away, he glanced at it carelessly.

In a moment, he started and stood still. The paper was folded in such a way that the date was visible above the wrapper. Gottfried looked at it in amazement. Since the night he had last seen Constance, and the day he had called on Miss Ferris, the recollection of which had suddenly returned to him, nearly two months had elapsed; and it seemed to him but two days. The intervening period was a total blank in his mind.

Startled and dazed, he stumbled on to the hotel; and having delivered the mail to Miss Fay, declined to go to the dining-room on the plea of a headache, and sought the privacy of his tent-room.

Here he threw himself upon the bed, and, momentarily forgetful of the thinness of the walls, groaned aloud. He could no longer conceal the truth from himself. He must be subject to attacks of dementia, on recovering from which he had no recollection of the period during which it lasted. It must be these repeated attacks that had made his early life fade more and more into a nebulous past, and only the last few months seem in any way living and real. That he had been apparently sane during the last of these attacks seemed probable from the remarks of the people about him; but if the phenomena continued, he feared they would result in permanent madness; and he blamed himself unsparingly for having won the love of Constance. Yet, when he first met her, he was hardly aware of his infirmity; it was only when she chided him in her gentle way for missing the concert that he really knew his lapses of memory were anything more serious than an occasional fit of absent-mindedness. Even when he had spoken to

her vaguely of business in the country, he did not think he had been really away, but that he had slept; or, perhaps, had temporarily forgotten all other things in the excitement of work. But now, his strange surroundings and the evidence that he had taken part in events of which he had no recollection, forced upon him a recognition of the more serious nature of his malady.

"I must go back," he said, "and tell her everything and release her, though it should break my heart to do so. But first," he pondered, "I will call on Miss Ferris again, and make her tell me the truth. It may be it was no fancied resemblance that she saw in the face in the locket. It may be she holds the key to the mystery."

He passed a restless night, full of impatience to return to Los Angeles; and in the early morning he stood on the deck of the Hermosa, waving his hat to a little knot of acquaintances on the shore. Slowly the boat swept out on the calm blue waves, and the beautiful bay and Avalon guarded by

its beetling heights grew misty and faint in the distance.

Gottfried leaned over the railing of the deck and watched the magic picture fade. Mysterious and unsatisfactory as his visit to Catalina had been, the place was full of charm, and in his artist's soul he felt a pang at leaving it. But the thought of Constance stirred in his heart and brought sudden tears to his eyes.

It was over at last, the soft, undulating motion of the boat, and the serene stretches of blue sky and purple sea. He found himself in the throng at San Pedro, rushing with the rest for the train. A swift passage over sandy stretches and between young orchards and cultivated fields, and he was again in the Arcade Station in Los Angeles, for the first time on familiar ground. It was about noon, and he took a car for the coffee-house he frequented.

X

A BROKEN PROMISE

As he entered and sat down at a table, he was confronted by a familiar face. It was that of Heinrich Dierssen.

"Hello!" said the latter, jumping to his feet and holding out his hand. "What part of the sky did you drop from, and when did you arrive? Give an account of yourself."

He spoke in German, as he always did when with Gottfried.

"I have been away — on business," said Gottfried evasively. He could not bring himself to tell the truth. How could he know how Heinrich would take his story? He might want to incarcerate him in an asylum.

Heinrich turned on him almost savagely.

"Look here, old fellow," he said, "that won't do. What business could be so absorbing as not to leave you time to write to

your fiancée for two months? She is looking pale and worn; paler than my little Emma was when I first met her."

"*Mein armes Liebchen*," murmured Gottfried, dropping his face on his hand. Then he turned suddenly on his friend, his eyes flashing. "Tell me, Heinrich," he said, "do you think I 'm a brute? Do you think I would have treated her like that if I had been able to do otherwise? I cannot explain to you, but won't you take my word for it? You don't mean, Dierssen," he exclaimed in sudden irritation, "that you are going to go back on a fellow just when he needs a friend the most?"

With an impulse of contrition, Heinrich held out his hand across the table, and Gottfried took it.

"I 'll take your word for it, Gottfried," he said. "But perhaps if you would trust me I might help you, for you seem to be in trouble."

"I 'll tell you what I 'll do, Heinrich," said Gottfried. "I have some business to

attend to this afternoon, and this evening I must go to see Constance. Come to the studio about ten o'clock, and if I 'm not back wait for me, and I will tell you my trouble and ask your advice."

With that Heinrich was forced to be content.

An hour later, Gottfried found himself again at the door of the Ferris residence on Adams Street. Now that he felt himself on the threshold of a discovery, his heart sank with foreboding. What might he not learn that would separate him from Constance forever? What horror, hitherto invisible, might not be disclosed to him? He felt tempted to retreat, but already there were footsteps in the hall.

The servant that answered his ring was not the same that had admitted him on the occasion of his previous call, and to Gottfried's relief, he gave no indication of recognition.

"Is Miss Ferris at home?" asked Gottfried, steadying his voice with an effort.

"No, sir," was the reply. "The family have gone to Coronado for a month."

Gottfried whitened.

"When did they go?" he asked.

"Yesterday morning," was the reply.

As Gottfried turned away, he thought with bitterness of his last day's pleasure at Catalina.

"If I had come home at once, I would have found her here," he said to himself. "And now — I must go to Constance and tell her — what? Oh! *mein Liebchen, mein Liebchen*, how can I give you up?" and tears of which he was not ashamed rose to his eyes.

It was that afternoon that Heinrich saw Constance on the street. He stopped and shook hands with her.

"Did you know that Gottfried has come back?" he said.

A sudden joy flashed across the girl's face and shone in her eyes.

"When, where?" she asked tremulously. For a moment her brain reeled, and it was

black before her eyes. The intensity of emotion passed, and she heard Heinrich's voice as in a dream.

"He came to the coffee-house as usual. He would not tell me where he had been, but he said he was coming to see you this evening."

"Thank you," said Constance simply; and for a moment she lifted to his face eyes that were full of tenderness and joy.

She passed on, and Heinrich muttered under his breath. It was well for Gottfried's faith in his friendship that he did not hear what he said.

That evening, when Constance had cleared the little table and put the house in order, she stood at her mirror looking sorrowfully at the reflection of her face. It was thin and worn, and she was afraid that Gottfried would miss in it the olden charm. But excitement had brought a pretty color to her cheeks, and although she did not know it, love and sorrow had etherealized the face to a higher type of beauty.

She let down the masses of her bright hair, and brushed it until it shone like threads of gold. Then she piled it like a crown on her head, studying the effect anxiously in the glass.

She put on a house-gown of soft, pale rose, the color that Gottfried liked best, and fastened about her neck the silver chain on which was suspended the locket he had given her. She stopped a moment to open it and kiss the face that looked out at her with tender eyes. She fastened fragrant lilies at her throat and in her hair. Her hands had trembled so with eager excitement that they could scarcely perform their tasks, but all the time the heart-throbs she could feel were beating a rhythm of joy. Gottfried had come back to her; he was not lost out of her life.

She went to her mother's room and, bending down, kissed the invalid softly on the brow; then she passed on to the little parlor and sat down at the piano. It was almost time for him to come, and she touched the

keys lightly with notes that rippled and broke like happy laughter. The music melted into a tender strain that was full of impatient yearning. She played softly that she might not miss the click of the gate-latch and the sound of the familiar step as it approached. Somewhere in a pepper-tree outside, a bird kept up a twittering accompaniment to the music within.

Late that night Constance lay on her couch with her face among the pillows. The crown of gold-brown hair had fallen about her shoulders over the pale rose of her dress. The lilies she had worn were crushed on the floor, and filled the room with a subtle fragrance.

Gottfried had not come.

The clock struck eleven in the studio where Heinrich Dierssen had been waiting for more than an hour for Gottfried to return. He rose and, after a few impatient turns about the room, strode through the door, snapping the spring-lock behind him. He stepped out on the silent street, and

began pacing up and down in front of the house.

The shadow of the trees, latticed with the white brilliance of the electric light at the corner, fell across the sidewalk. The silence was unbroken save by the occasional noise of a passing car. Heinrich walked back and forth, the wonder and pity of his thoughts about Constance and Gottfried softened by an undertone of personal joy; for the face of Emma Burroughs, young and pretty with a happy content, seemed to smile at him in the darkness, as it had smiled when he asked her to be his wife.

For nearly an hour he paced the street, up one side and down the other, keeping the darkened window of the studio in sight; then, with an angry mutter, he turned and walked rapidly away.

XI

MRS. CARRINGTON IS ALARMED

PERKINS went running up the steps in response to the violent ringing of the bell, and entering his master's study, found that gentleman striding about the room in a transport of rage.

"What do you mean, you blockhead?" he stormed. "How have you dared to meddle with my room? Where have you put it, you scoundrel, you idiot?"

With the words, he seized the unfortunate man in his athletic grasp, and shook him and flung him off in a fine imitation of Salvini's treatment of Iago when playing Othello.

The astonished servant, who, accustomed as he had been to his master's ebullitions of ungovernable temper, had never before suffered personal violence at his hands, picked himself up with a rueful face.

"I'll make him pay for this," he muttered to himself. "It 's worth ten dollars at least. I 'll not help him out of another scrape without an extra tip." At the same time, he looked at his master with an expression of innocent reproach.

"Indeed, Mr. Rex," he said, "it was your mother that took away the picture, if that 's what you mean. I made bold to tell her you 'd be angry when she had it moved to the attic; but"—

"To the attic?" thundered his master. "Bring it down inside of five minutes, or I 'll break your head." And the terrified servant hastily withdrew to do his bidding.

A few moments later, when the Madonna hung again in its accustomed place, and Perkins had been peremptorily dismissed from the room, Rex Carrington sat down by a table opposite the picture and rested his head on his hand. His heart beat heavily, and the blood coursed madly through his veins.

"I 'm a fool," he said bitterly, "and

totally unworthy of her." As he spoke he turned his eyes upon the picture, and his whole face softened. It was a handsome enough face, and not lacking in possibilities of nobility when not disfigured by passion or brutalized by dissipation; for as yet his reckless habits had left no permanent marks on the finely moulded features. Just now it wore its best expression, and the eyes of the picture looked straight in his with a serene confidence and joy.

"Why can I not find her?" he groaned. "I would try to be worthy of her love." And he fell to building castles in the air that his chosen companions, if they could have seen them, would have laughed to scorn.

A sudden thought broke into his meditations, and he rose and touched the bell. Perkins responded, still looking a little bewildered and afraid. But his master's passion had subsided, and he spoke calmly.

"Was there any answer to my note to Miss Alicia?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Perkins; "a note and a package."

"Bring them to me," said Rex shortly.

When Perkins had done as he was bidden and again retired, Rex sat for a moment with the note folded on the table before him and the package in his hand.

"I have burned my bridges now," he muttered. "There is no way of return; I must go on and find her and win her."

Still he did not open the package nor read the note. Instead, he let his eyes rest on the painting and his thoughts wander away to the fair unknown original.

"It is *la grande passion* at last," he said to himself. "Now I can understand my Petrarch and my Dante."

He stirred uneasily as the thought of his unworthiness recurred to him. He tried to shake off the feeling with a laugh.

"I am growing morbid," he thought. "After all, how am I worse than other men? It is only that she is a saint, and all must suffer by comparison with her. And that

presumptuous painter — what could he do for her? Give her a life of poverty and fruitless hopes, while I — I can fulfill her every wish, and gratify her slightest whim. But he, confound him, he may be with her whenever the fancy seizes him; and she may be fond of him."

A bitter pang of jealousy pierced his heart, such as he had never felt before; and he hated his fortunate rival with all the force of his impetuous nature.

"Give me a fair fight in an open field," he groaned, "and I would not complain. If she might choose between us," and he smiled confidently at the thought, "I would be satisfied. But for him to keep her hidden, for him to balk me like this — zounds! I could give him a sword-thrust with pleasure if he did not elude me so skillfully. He has doubtless heard of my reputation as a fencer since he sent the challenge; and he is a brave man — on paper," he concluded his meditations contemptuously.

He was startled from his reflections by the

sound of a voice in the hall below. It was that of his neighbor, the baron. He slipped the package and the letter hastily in his pocket, and turned away from the picture.

A moment later, the privileged guest had bounded up the stairway, three steps at a time, and stood in the door of the study.

"Come in," said Rex, rising and bringing forward a chair. The baron entered and sat down opposite the picture. No sooner had he seen it than his handsome blonde face flushed with pleasure.

"Is it an ideal face," he asked, "or is there a woman living with a face like that?"

Rex colored slightly with annoyance. His futile dreams had given him a sense of ownership, that resented the admiration of other men.

"My man was told by the dealer that it is the copy of a living face," he returned carelessly; "but I have not learned the name of the model."

"The artist, I see," said the baron, who had risen and was standing before the pic-

ture, "is a countryman of mine. Who is he? what has he done? It strikes me that this is extraordinary."

"He's a cad of a fellow," said Rex shortly. "He can't do anything but paint."

They had been talking in German, but the speech of Rex was hesitating and far from idiomatic, although he had been a student of German for several years, and had recently been improving his accent by conversation with the baron and the baroness.

It was later in the day that Rex went out with two young men of the fashionable club to which he belonged; and the faithful Perkins saw nothing more of him till he went to the club-rooms at twelve o'clock that night. There he found him, his head on his folded arms that rested on the table, in the midst of a débris of broken glasses and decanters. A companion, in a similar state of somnolence, lay on the floor where he had fallen. The janitor stood in the doorway, surveying the scene with a resignation born of familiarity.

"Well, Carpenter," said Perkins quietly, "I guess you 'll have to help me carry Mr. Rex out."

"Did you bring the carriage?" queried the janitor.

Perkins nodded.

"Then I guess you 'll have to drop the other gent on the way home," said Carpenter, as he turned up the heavy face to see who it was. "It won't be out of your way," he added, naming the address.

As they carried Rex out of the room, a letter fell from his pocket; and on returning for his companion, Perkins picked it up and put it in his own pocket.

It was between two and three o'clock that morning that the valet, who had put his master to bed, heard him stirring in his room. He arose and, hastily throwing on his clothes, entered the hall just in time to see his master creep stealthily out of the house. The valet stole after him, careful to make no noise. But his caution seemed unnecessary; for Rex looked neither to the right nor the

left, but pursued his way steadily until he had reached the street. Then, for a moment, he paused; suddenly starting off at such speed that Perkins found it difficult to follow him. He succeeded, however, in keeping him in sight, though at some distance. He passed from the fashionable quarter of the city and through the principal business blocks toward the river, pausing at last, after his long walk, before a dingy lodging-house, with a colored lamp in front of the door. Here, to Perkins's amazement, he turned in and was lost to sight.

But only for a moment, for Perkins had followed in hot pursuit, entering a dim hallway, and stumbling up a flight of uncarpeted stairs to a gloomy corridor above. He was just in time to see the familiar form of his master enter a room at the end of the hall and to hear the key turned in the lock as the door closed after him.

Perkins went to the door and rapped, but there was no response.

"Mr. Rex," he cried, "Mr. Rex!"

But the room was as quiet as though unoccupied, and remained in darkness. Alarmed at his master's strange behavior, but unwilling to rouse his anger, Perkins ceased his importunities, determined to try a new way of reaching him. Returning to the head of the stairway, he found a bell and pulled the cord.

After several minutes a man in his shirt sleeves and with unshaven face made his appearance.

"Do you want a room?" he asked.

"No," said Perkins; "I want to see Mr. Rex Carrington."

"There 's no such person here," was the reply.

"I saw him come in not five minutes ago," Perkins persisted.

"You 're mistaken," said the man, as he turned to go away.

"Look here," said Perkins, with sudden decision; "I saw him come in, and I 'm going to see him, or I 'll know the reason why."

"Don't try a bluff on me," said the man, drawing a pistol from his pocket and pointing it at Perkins. "Now go," he added with an oath, "or I 'll blow off the top of your head."

Perkins retreated precipitately down the stairway, and did not stop to consider his course until he had put several blocks between himself and his threatened assailant.

Then he halted and considered what to do. He might call on the police for assistance; but he knew his master would be furious at the publicity. He reasoned that Rex must have had some object in going to the house; that he had not been there long enough before his own arrival for any harm to have befallen him; and that he would probably return home when he had finished his mysterious business. Accordingly Perkins, with due regard to his personal safety and the security of his position, decided to go home quietly and await the course of events.

It was some weeks later that Mrs. Carrington summoned the valet to her. She was

in her private sitting-room, in a négligée robe. Her face was very pale and there were dark rings underneath her eyes. Her jeweled fingers were interlaced nervously in her lap.

"Where is your master?" she demanded, looking at the valet imperiously.

"If you would only spare yourself, madame," the man began uncertainly.

"We have had enough of this, Perkins," said the lady, rising. "Tell me instantly; where is my son?"

"He is in bed, madame," replied the servant.

"Then I am going to him." And Mrs. Carrington moved toward the door.

Instinctively Perkins stepped forward to intercept her.

"It will be very painful to you," he said hurriedly; "and Mr. Rex will be very angry."

"Let me pass," she said in a stern voice; "let me pass, or I will have you put out of the house."

The man fell back abashed, and she passed into the hallway. He followed her, wringing his hands.

"Whatever will become of me now?" he mumbled to himself. "She 'll be after me because I deceived her; and Mr. Rex 'll be like the devil because I let her know."

He followed her, shaking so that it was with difficulty he kept his teeth from chattering.

Mrs. Carrington did not pause till she had reached her son's chamber and opened the door. Then she stopped on the threshold with an exclamation of dismay. She had nerved herself for the horrors of delirium tremens; for groans and shouts and curses, and a face transformed by fiendish passion or torturing agony. But instead of this, there was utter silence. The room was empty, and the bed had evidently been unoccupied the night before. She looked around at the trembling, shrinking figure of the valet, and turned away in contemptuous scorn. She crossed the room and parted

the portières that curtained the dressing-room. It, too, was empty.

She retraced her steps, and, crossing the hall, opened the door of his study. She started back as her eyes fell on the picture of the Madonna, and a momentary sense of anger relieved the tension of an awful fear.

"I thought I had ordered that removed," she said, looking back at the valet.

"It was done, madame," was the reply; "but Mr. Rex had it brought back again."

"He is bewitched with the face," she murmured to herself.

Then she turned to the servant with the question he dreaded.

"What have you done with your master?" she asked steadily.

"I — I have done nothing," he stammered. "He went away of his own will. I will swear it on the Bible."

"Come back to my room," she said sternly; "I will listen to your explanation there."

After an interview of some length, the valet retired; and fifteen minutes later he sat with Mrs. Carrington in her carriage, which was rolling rapidly toward the lower part of the city.

XII

THE ARREST

Some time before, as Constance passed down the street on her daily rounds one morning, she looked up at Gottfried's window, as she never failed to do when going by. To her surprise, the blind was raised, and Gottfried sat at his easel, at work on her portrait. He looked out and smiled, bowing as usual. Involuntarily she stopped and clasped her hands tightly before her. He sprang from his seat, took down his hat from the rack in the hall, and the next moment stood beside her.

"What is the matter, *mein Liebchen?*" he said. "Did you want me?"

For reply, she slipped her hand in his and drew him along beside her.

"Gottfried, Gottfried!" she half whispered, "I thought I had lost you."

"No, *mein Liebchen*," he said tenderly, noticing how pale she looked and how the heart-shape of her face was accentuated. "I have been on a wild-goose chase to Catalina Island, but you see I have returned. I have been watching for you this morning; I knew, dear, you would come and look in at my window."

His voice had dropped to a passionate undertone, and he pressed the little hand that lay trembling in his.

"And you will not go away again, Gottfried?" she pleaded, looking at him with tender eyes.

"*Ach! mein Liebchen*," he groaned; "if I could only promise you."

He despised himself for his weakness; but already, at sight of her face, his resolution to tell her his trouble and to release her grew faint in his heart. He felt that he could never give her up. The longing to be alone with her, to put his arms about her and press kisses on her lips, mastered him.

"Come, Constance," he said, as they

heard the rush of the car behind them; "let us go to Westlake Park and be alone for a little while — together."

She had only a second for thought, when the car had reached them. She remembered her waiting pupils, but she had not the strength to resist the pleading in his eyes. It was so long since she had seen him. He stopped the car and helped her on, sitting down on the front seat beside her.

The ride was long, and as they swept up and down the hills, the sense of the motion and the wind in her face seemed transformed to a sense of the course of fate. Gottfried's hand sought hers, holding it tightly under the folds of her cape. Her fingers fastened around his and clung to them.

When they reached the park, they found a shaded bench by the lake, where they sat down. They were quite alone, and for a moment their lips met. Then Constance looked about her apprehensively and Gottfried laughed. There was no one in sight.

By tacit consent, they avoided the subject of his absence, and occupied themselves with those important trifles of mutual loneliness and extravagant dreams that could be of interest to no one but themselves.

Suddenly, as Gottfried drew his handkerchief from his pocket, he shook from its folds a little packet that fell at Constance's feet. The girl picked it up with a laugh.

"I found it; it is mine," she said.

Gottfried watched her as she untied the string and opened the lid of a tiny box. She gave a little cry of wonder and delight, for set in a band of gold that lay between the velvet cushions shone a splendid diamond. She looked at Gottfried inquiringly.

For a moment he paused and flushed painfully; then he took her hand and drew from it the little mended glove.

"Once, *mein Liebchen*," he said softly, "you seemed a little hurt because I gave you no ring. It was a foolish prejudice on my part, and I could not bear to seem to slight you; so I have brought you this."

He drew the ring from the box and slipped it on her finger. She lifted her face to his, and he bent down and kissed her.

"But I am afraid it cost a very great deal, Gottfried," she said. "I am afraid I ought not to wear it."

"Nothing is too good for my little love," he returned, holding up her hand and looking at the gem as it flashed in the light.

"Oh!" she exclaimed suddenly, "I must see what you have put in it."

She drew it off, and holding it up, looked on the inner side of the gold band. Gottfried bent over her apprehensively; and as he looked, he gave a sigh of relief. There was no inscription whatever.

A shade of disappointment crossed the girl's fair face. Gottfried saw it, and thought only how he might make reparation.

"Give it to me," he said, "and I will take it to a jeweler and have it engraved."

She held it out to him, looking up in his face.

"What will it be?" she asked.

"What should it be," he replied, "but '*mein Liebchen?*'"

He put the ring in his pocket, and the talk drifted to other things.

"You don't know how Emma Burroughs has changed," said Constance. "She is as happy, almost as happy as I am. But they are waiting, as we are," she added; "they cannot marry till Heinrich gets some practice."

"He will make his way yet," said Gottfried; "he has great ability. Sometime he will seize an opportunity and bring himself into public notice."

The speaker did not dream that he himself was soon to furnish that opportunity to his friend.

"You should hear Emma try to talk German," laughed Constance. "It is too funny. But it is almost pathetic to hear her try to make Mrs. Dierssen understand her. Even Heinrich cannot interpret it."

The morning passed quickly, and Constance rose at last with tardy contrition.

"Mamma will be expecting me," she said; "and I have missed my lessons. I feel like a naughty child that has been playing truant."

"I will come up this evening to make peace for you," said Gottfried. "I have been expecting a new pupil myself, but he may not come till afternoon."

As they parted half an hour later, Gottfried stopped off in town for his lunch, and Constance, remaining on the car, looked after his retreating figure with the old dread that she might not see it again for many days. But this time he did not disappoint her. He had fallen into his usual habits as though there had been no break in them; and every morning he greeted her at the studio window, and every evening he spent with her in reading and singing, or strolling under the pepper-trees that bordered the quiet street.

It was several days after his return that he brought her the ring, engraved with the familiar words, "*Mein Liebchen.*" The

same evening, Emma Burroughs came in, and shortly after, Heinrich Dierssen. Gottfried drew out the card-table, and they began to play whist.

It chanced that Constance dealt first, and Emma noticed the flashing of the stone on her finger.

"What a beautiful ring!" she exclaimed.

Constance blushed.

"Gottfried gave it to me," she said.

Heinrich looked at him in surprise.

"You thought better of your superstitious prejudice, did you?" he laughed.

Gottfried hesitated a moment before he spoke.

"Well, you see," he said awkwardly, "you gave Emma a ring, and I thought Constance would want one, too."

"But mine is only a gold band," said Heinrich. "A doctor without patients cannot compete with an artist with rich patrons."

Heinrich was a connoisseur in stones, and he was amazed at Gottfried's expenditure;

but the latter offered no explanation or excuse.

"I told him he was extravagant," laughed Constance.

Heinrich led and the play began.

When he was dealing, the girls exchanged rings, to look at the inscriptions.

"What is it?" said Emma, handing the ring she held to Heinrich.

"'*Mein Liebchen*,'" he said, reading the German script. "Emma has not been able to acquire more German than the words on her ring, '*Ich liebe dich*,'" he added, laughing.

"It means the same, does n't it?" asked Emma.

"It is the difference between 'my little love' and 'I love you,' if there is a difference," returned Heinrich.

Mrs. Wilbur, lying on her couch in the bay-window, watched the players with a contented smile. Occasionally, she joined in the conversation; but for the most part, she lay silent, watching the bright young

faces with mingled visions of their future and her own past.

That night, they had the rarebit, made by Gottfried's skillful hands, and the Russian tea that Constance was so fond of serving. As her little hands fluttered over the tea-cups, the ring flashed in the light; and in spite of his happy mood, the couplet about the *Ringlein* persistently repeated itself in her lover's mind. But even he did not dream of the part the ring was to play in their destiny.

The merry party separated late that night, Gottfried and Heinrich walking off arm-in-arm, while the girls stood together in the doorway. As the men disappeared in the darkness, Constance and Emma turned with a common impulse and kissed each other.

"Oh, I am so happy," said Constance.

With a flash of recurrent feeling, Emma seemed to herself to sit once more over her sewing, listening to the voices of Constance and her lover at the door. The next instant the joy of the present had returned in warm pulsations to her heart.

"And I," she said in response to her companion's words, "I did not know it would be possible for me ever to be happy again. Do you think it is wrong, Constance," she went on, sinking her voice almost to a whisper, "do you think it is wrong for me to be happier even than I was with Robert?"

"No," said the younger girl, putting her arm about her companion's waist, "Heinrich is the right one; and if Robert loved you, he would be glad for you to be happy."

"Where did you get the ring?" Heinrich was saying to Gottfried. "It is one of the most superb stones I have ever seen."

"I did not get it here," was the evasive reply. "I have had it — some time."

"But you had it engraved here?" persisted Heinrich.

"Yes," said Gottfried; "at Mason's, the other day."

For some time the days passed much as before Gottfried went away. The lovers resumed their readings and moonlight

walks, and discussed plans for the future as of old. Gottfried no longer tried to keep the resolution he had made to tell Constance his trouble. It would be better, he said to himself, to wait till he had seen Miss Ferris and had learned what he could from her. For the same reason he did not fulfill his promise to Heinrich, who did not like to press him for his confidence.

One day, Constance went to give a lesson to Lillian Ferris; the first after the return of the family from Coronado.

Just before she left, Miss Ferris entered the room, with the pretext of a careless question to her sister; but Constance felt sure she had come in with some design in regard to herself. She was not surprised when the young lady's eyes rested on the diamond that sparkled on her finger; but she was not prepared for the sudden pallor of her face.

"I see," Miss Ferris said at last, almost huskily, "that your — your lover has at last given you the ring."

Constance bowed without speaking.

"May I ask," continued the girl, "the name of the liberal donor?"

Something in her tone stung Constance to quick resentment.

"Certainly," she said; "it is Gottfried Jäger."

"The painter?" queried Miss Ferris.

Again Constance bowed.

"And he lives" — suggested Miss Ferris.

Constance's eyes flashed, but she gave her the street and number.

"And now," she said, turning upon her interlocutor, "perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me what you know of him, and who the lady is to whom you said he was engaged?"

"I was mistaken," returned Miss Ferris coolly. "It was only a fancied resemblance of the features. I was aware at the time that the expression of the face was not the same."

She turned and walked out of the room; and before Constance had reached the sidewalk, she had ordered her carriage.

That evening Constance waited for Gottfried in vain. It was the first time he had failed her since the morning he had gone with her to Westlake Park. Even Heinrich did not come to see Emma; but he had sent word that he had been called out to his first case.

Constance wandered about the house in growing uneasiness. Now, she sat by her mother's couch and talked of trifles, avoiding, as usual, all reference to Gottfried's failure to appear; now she entered the room where the Burroughs sisters sat stitching, Emma's pretty face flushed with truant thoughts, Agnes looking at her from time to time with brave efforts to be glad of her happiness and forget the monotony of her own life. Again Constance wandered out in the garden, lifting her head from the flowers to look surreptitiously down the street, or sat at the piano and played snatches of music, stopping abruptly to go and stand at the window with a faint hope that even yet she might see the familiar

form emerge from the shadows of the street.

But the evening was over at last; and she lay in her room, shuddering with vague fears and half-defined thoughts of evil, that were lost at last in fitful slumber, broken by torturing visions.

She awoke in the morning unrefreshed. There was no hope in her heart that she would hear from her lover that day. She thought that days and perhaps weeks must pass before she would see him again; and then it would be as though he had been resurrected from the dead, so absolute would be his silence concerning the interval of his absence. Already the perfect curves of her cheeks had disappeared, and hollows had defined themselves under her eyes.

As she went down-stairs, she was startled by a violent pull at the door-bell. She answered the summons, and started with apprehension at sight of a messenger boy. With trembling fingers she tore open the envelope he handed her, and drew out the note that

was inside. It was dated at the jail, and the words of the message danced before her eyes in a strange mist. But their terrible meaning had not failed to penetrate brain and heart with a sickening sense of horror.

Gottfried had been arrested for the murder of Rex Carrington.

XIII

THE RING

An hour later, Constance went to the jail, accompanied by Heinrich Dierssen.

As they passed along the streets, the newsboys were crying the morning papers.

"Full account of the murder; tragedy in high life; sensational details; all about the duel."

Constance shuddered and clung to Heinrich's arm.

The young man had seen the paper that morning, and had hastened to see Constance, but not before word had reached her from Gottfried. He recalled now the sensational head-lines that had stared at him as he opened the paper at the breakfast table that morning: "Lured to his Death; A Figueroa Street Millionaire Slain in a Lodging-house. Where is the body of Rex Carring-

ton? — Gottfried Jäger, the painter, arrested for the crime."

He roused himself to repeat to Constance words of reassurance and hope. The girl, while confident of her lover's innocence, was bewildered and oppressed with fear and terror.

The way seemed interminably long to her, but they reached their destination at last. For a moment she shrank back; then she controlled her aversion to the place, and followed their guide calmly, still clinging, however, to Heinrich's arm.

She entered the cell alone, and Gottfried started to his feet with an inarticulate cry. His face was haggard and worn, his eyes sunken and feverishly bright. He looked at her as though uncertain of her feelings, — a mingled look of doubt, entreaty, and fear. She flung herself in his arms, and pressed her face against his cheek.

"Gottfried, dear Gottfried," she whispered.

"*Mein Liebchen, mein Liebchen*," he

moaned; "God forgive me for the sorrow I have caused you."

"But it is not your fault, and it will be all right after a while," she returned bravely; "after a while, when you are free again."

"And you believe that I am innocent?" he asked.

"I know it," she said simply.

His only answer was a groan.

She looked at his face, and it frightened her, it was set in such lines of fear and horror.

"What is it, Gottfried?" she asked.

"I would give my right hand," he said with sudden vehemence, "if I could know — if I could be sure that I am innocent."

She shrank back and looked at him with beseeching eyes.

"What do you mean?" she cried. "You know you are innocent; tell me so with your own lips."

He looked at her sadly, his excitement subsiding as hers arose.

"Before God," he said solemnly, "I do

not know whether I have done this thing or not. I should have told you the curse of my life long ago," he added in bitter self-reproach; "more than once I have tried to tell you, but I had not the strength to give you up."

He covered his face with his hands and groaned.

At his inexplicable words, Constance grew pale with a sudden fear. Had his trouble made him mad? But one thing she knew: mad or sane, the real Gottfried that she loved was free from crime. She bent toward him and drew away his hands.

"Tell me now, Gottfried," she said gently; "you need not be afraid. Whatever it is, I love you."

"Bless you, *mein Liebchen*," he said brokenly, as he took her hand.

Suddenly he started, and a ghastly pallor overspread his face.

"Where is the ring?" he cried.

She bowed her head in silence, and tears fell on their clasped hands.

"I know," he said quietly, "they have taken it for evidence against me."

She was still silent.

"Poor little girl," he said; "when did they do it? Before you received word from me, or after?"

"After," she replied; "just before I started out to come here."

He lifted her hand and laid it against his cheek.

"Fool that I was," he said, "to take the hazard of such a thing. But I have always kept the money I found in my possession, not knowing how to return it, and thinking that in some way it must belong to me. Then, I did not know how to explain to you my possession of the ring; I was afraid — forgive me, dear — that after what Miss Ferris told you, you would think me untrue to you if I did not give the ring to you. And I yielded to the momentary impulse to save myself in your eyes. Fool, fool!"

"I don't understand, Gottfried," said Constance in bewilderment.

"No, of course you don't!" he exclaimed in self-reproach. "How can I make you believe what I say? I never saw the ring until you opened the packet yourself. I did not know there was such a packet in my pocket till it fell at your feet."

Constance looked at him in wordless amazement.

"And that is not all," he continued. "I do not know where I am or what I am doing during those long absences that have grieved you so. I must be in a state of dementia, and what I may have done during the last attack I do not know. They tell me that in the morning I came out of the room in the lodging-house that Rex Carrington was last seen to enter the night beforehand; and that I subsequently gave to you a valuable ring that belonged to him. It is also known that I had feelings of enmity toward him, and as he has not been seen since that night, the circumstantial evidence is very strong against me."

Constance had paled to a marble white-

ness, and for a moment, indeed, she seemed turned to stone. Then the color came back to her cheeks, and a beautiful smile illumined her face.

"Then you have been true to me indeed," she said; "it was through no possible negligence of your own that I did not hear from you when you went away."

"And if — if in that mysterious state of which I know nothing, nothing more than of the scenes beyond the grave," he said; "if in that state I should" —

She interrupted him with a soft hand on his mouth.

"Then, should it be true," she said steadily, "it was not you; and I love my Gottfried just the same."

He kissed the fingers that lay over his lips.

"But it is not true," she said. "I know it can not be true. There is some terrible mistake. You must be brave, and all will yet be made clear."

As she spoke, she bent toward him, and for a moment he held her in his arms.

A light tap sounded at the door of the cell.

"Heinrich has come to see you, too," she said.

The next moment the young man entered and held out his hand.

"You, too, believe in me?" asked Gottfried.

"Yes," was the reply, "I believe in you, and I hope I can help you."

Gottfried repeated to him the substance of what he had told Constance. Heinrich listened attentively, and when he had finished, gave him his hand again.

"I must go," he said. "I have work to do. Who is your counsel?"

"Charles Bernard, of the firm of Watson and Bernard," said Gottfried.

"And what time was set for the preliminary trial?" continued Dierssen.

"To-morrow morning," Gottfried replied.

"Then I have no time to lose," said Heinrich. And he hurried Constance away.

"What are you going to do?" asked the girl, as they turned up the street together.

"I am going to study the phenomena of amnesia," he said.

"What is that?" asked Constance.

"A blotting out of the memory. I believe that will in some way explain the mystery of Gottfried's life. He is not in any way insane; and yet whole weeks of his life are an utter blank in his mind. It may be," he added musingly, "that he is responsible for Rex Carrington's disappearance; but I don't believe that under any condition short of insanity he would commit murder."

That night Heinrich Dierssen sat in his little office, his desk strewn with books. One after another, he tossed aside the ponderous German volumes he had consulted; and at last he drew from a neglected corner of his book-case some slender French books bound in a brilliant red, at the same time taking down a German-French dictionary to verify the medical terms. For a time he read in absorbed attention; then he flung the books impatiently aside as he came upon references to other books that were not in

his possession. It was too late to try to get them in the city that night; and he was not at all sure he would be able to find them when he did begin his search. He fell to musing over the strange occurrences in the life of his friend; and more than once he started at vague suggestions of thoughts that seemed weird and almost uncanny. The case held a double interest for him, both personal and scientific; and his continued leisure in the strange country to which he had come had given him opportunity to follow up his studies as he wished. Before he went to bed he made out a list of books from the references he had encountered in his reading, and determined, if possible, to see the lawyer Gottfried had named as his counsel before the case came up in the justice's court in the morning.

Through the long night Constance lay awake, with painful monotony going over the scenes of the day; repeating word for word her conversation with Gottfried, and the assurances of hope that Heinrich Diers-

sen had given her. But the more she thought of it all, the more inexplicable it seemed. In whatever condition Gottfried might be during the terms of absence, how had he managed to elude his friends, unless he made a habit of leaving the city? And even in that case, if he were temporarily mad, why had the dementia not been noticed and brought to light? But if he hid himself away, with the instinct of self-preservation, how could he have been at the lodging-house in Rex Carrington's room that night? It seemed to her impossible that his mind should be unbalanced. There was no evidence of it in any of his actions; he had no eccentricities, no irregularities of habit outside of his sudden and unexplained disappearances.

The possibility of his having committed the deed, although the horror of it hung over his own mind, she would not for a moment entertain; but she trembled with the fear that the circumstantial evidence might be strong enough to convict him. And even

should he be acquitted on the ground of temporary insanity, would they not take him from her and confine him in a madhouse? Or should he be freed on failure of sufficient evidence to convict, how would his sensitive nature endure the strain of popular sentiment against him and his own uncertainty as to his innocence? Already she had noted the lines of suffering in his face; and in a flash of shuddering dread she could see him bowed, broken, and prematurely old. She thought of his genius crushed by the blow and lost to the world; of his life passed in the patience of a sorrow without hope. Then the alternative rose before her mind with realistic horror; she could hear the awful words of the judge as he sentenced him to death; she could see him on the day of execution, pale, but wearing still on his face the dignity and nobility that were natural to him; she could hear his familiar step as he passed her on the way to the scaffold —

With a cry of horror she rose and paced

her room ; till at length, exhausted, she lay down again, once more to go over the weary, torturing round of thoughts, leading always to the awful climax of her supreme fear.

XIV

A REMARKABLE RESEMBLANCE

When Constance entered the court-room with Mrs. Dierssen, Heinrich, and Emma Burroughs, the place was already nearly full. They took their seats near the front, and Constance swept the room with a rapid glance. Several young men, evidently friends of Rex Carrington's, were standing near the door; and Constance caught snatches of their conversation from time to time.

"They say there is a remarkable resemblance," one of them observed.

"But only of the features," said another. "The expression, the walk, all the movements are entirely different."

"Ha! ha!" came in loud tones from a different part of the room, shutting out the sound of the other voices; "I beat him with four aces."

"Nonsense," the second speaker was saying, when Constance could again hear the talk of the group by the door; "the difference in age is enough to settle that."

"And at the next deal he threw up his hand," said the noisy individual across the room.

"There 's the landlord of the lodging-house," said one of the men by the door. "What induced Rex Carrington to go to such a place?"

"Gambling debts," came with startling distinctness from the other side of the room. But it was not in answer to the question that Constance had heard; it was the continuance of the conversation in which the loud-voiced individual was engaged.

The justice, a tall, thin, severe-looking man, drummed on his desk, waiting impatiently for the arrival of the witnesses for the prosecution. The general hum through the court-room reached Constance's ears in broken snatches of sentences that repeated themselves mechanically in her brain.

"Artist of ability — won the third heat — population of fifty — ha! ha! — painted a Madonna — you don't say — was engaged to Miss Ferris — disappeared — on the new electric road — ninety degrees in San — in love with a picture — Santa Monica races — duel at Redondo — drank heavily — vote for — delirium tremens — no — I heard — wonder" —

The babble suddenly ceased, and there was a stir at the door. A tall, veiled lady past middle age appeared, accompanied by a lady much younger, with a beautiful, proud face; and followed by an alert, obsequious serving-man.

"His mother, his fiancée, his valet," were the murmured comments.

The young men at the door bowed, and one of them led the way across the room, where the party sat down by the prosecuting attorney. Mrs. Carrington dropped her eyes; but when court was opened and the prisoner led in, she raised her veil and let her glance rest full upon him.

Constance had turned from the little group to her lover, and as she looked at him, tears filled her eyes. Notwithstanding the briefness of the time that had elapsed since his arrest, his appearance was greatly changed; his face was haggard, his eyes deep-sunken, and new lines were graven deeply on his forehead and about his mouth. Constance even noticed among the dark locks that curled about his face a glisten of silver that she had never seen there before. In the space of less than forty-eight hours, he had aged ten years. He turned to Constance and smiled. His face was grave, but wore no consciousness of guilt; and he met bravely the curious glances that were cast upon him by the people assembled to hear the trial.

As he took his seat beside his counsel, Mrs. Carrington sprang to her feet with a smothered cry.

"My son!" she exclaimed; "my son!"

With the words, she started toward the prisoner; but as he turned his face and met

her gaze with his serious, questioning eyes, she fell back in bewilderment.

Miss Ferris, too, had started as her eyes first fell upon the prisoner; but she had quickly recovered herself.

"It is a remarkable resemblance," she whispered.

In the mean time, the valet had gone forward and spoken to the prisoner.

"Mr. Rex!" he said. "How did you come here?"

Gottfried looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"I am Gottfried Jäger," he said.

The voice was pitched low and had a noticeable German accent; and there was a quiet dignity about the speaker that impressed the valet, accustomed to the imperious impulsiveness of his master.

The servant looked up at the stern reprimand of the justice.

"Your honor," he said simply, "I thought this man was my master; but I was mistaken."

In the midst of the hush of expectancy that had attended the episode, the justice resumed the proceedings of the court.

In the reading of the charge, Gottfried started as the name of the missing man was pronounced. It was Geoffrey H. Carrington for the murder of whom he had been arrested. Even intimate friends of the missing man were surprised.

"What does it mean?" asked one of the group by the door.

"That was his real name, you know," replied another. "Rex was only a nickname given him in his infancy, on account of his imperious disposition. It was so *à propos* that it clung to him. They say there has been a Geoffrey in the family ever since the Norman Conquest."

"And what is the H for?"

"I don't know; but it stands for his mother's family name."

The first witness for the prosecution was Henry Perkins, the valet.

He testified that on the night of his mas-

ter's disappearance, he had been roused from sleep by movements in the latter's room; and that hastily dressing and going into the hall, he saw his master leaving the house and followed him. He watched him enter a lodging-house, and pursuing him into the place, saw him go into a room at the end of the hallway. The witness tapped at the door, but received no response. Upon calling the landlord and demanding to see his master, he was ejected from the premises with threats of violence. Some time later, Mrs. Carrington, who believed her son suffering from an attack of delirium tremens, insisted upon seeing him; and when she found he was not in the house, questioned the witness, eliciting from him the information he had already given the court. Witness and Mrs. Carrington then went together to the lodging-house, and were told by the landlord that he knew nothing of Rex Carrington; but that the room witness had seen his master enter had been occupied that night by Gottfried Jäger, whom he had

seen depart the morning following the disappearance. Since that time, nothing had been seen of the missing man.

He also testified that a ring then produced in court had been given by his master to Miss Ferris, his fiancée; and that a packet looking like a small jewel-box, such as would contain a ring, had been sent to him by the lady with a note. He had himself delivered the note and the packet to his master the last day the latter had been seen; and that night, only a few hours before the disappearance, when he was carrying him from the club-rooms to the carriage in an inebriated condition, the note fell from his pocket and witness picked it up. The note was produced and read. It consisted of a few lines, in which the writer expressed her willingness to release Mr. Carrington from his engagement to her, and stated that she returned the ring. Whether or not the ring contained an inscription witness did not know, as he had never seen it except on the lady's hand.

The witness further testified that an enmity existed between his master and Gottfried Jäger, on account of the former's seeking the acquaintance of the latter's fiancée; and that Gottfried Jäger had challenged his master to a duel with swords. The note that Gottfried had sent Carrington after the failure of the latter to appear at the rendezvous, in which the writer stigmatized him as a coward, and declared he deserved to be shot down in the street, was produced and read.

Mrs. Carrington substantiated the statements of the valet relative to the lodging-house; as did also William Beck, the proprietor of that place. The latter added that some months before, the prisoner had first come to his place; that he was "in liquor," and asked for a room, paying rent for it for six months in advance, with the injunction that it should be kept for his use, although he would probably occupy it but rarely. Since then, he had visited the place several times, never to the knowledge of witness staying more than one night at a time, some-

times only a few hours during the day. He had never, to the knowledge of witness, received visitors in his room, and apparently spent the time in sleep. It was on the morning after his first visit to the house that he had given him the name of Gottfried Jäger. At that time, he seemed confused, as though he had not entirely recovered from the effects of his debauch.

The next witness was Miss Alicia Ferris. She testified that she had known Geoffrey Carrington for several years; and that she had been engaged to him. The diamond ring which had already been produced in court she identified as the one he had given to her and she had returned to him. She also identified it as the ring she had subsequently seen on the finger of Constance Wilbur; who, upon being questioned, admitted that it had been given to her by Gottfried Jäger. The ring had no inscription when in her possession; and she had never until now seen the words engraved upon it. The witness had never seen the prisoner before;

but recognized him as the original of a portrait she had seen in a locket worn by Constance Wilbur, who told her she was his fiancée. The witness had thought at first it was the portrait of Geoffrey Carrington; but although there was a remarkable resemblance between the two, it extended to the features alone, the expression of the face, the movements, and the voice being entirely different. She was positive that no one, seeing either of the men alive, could, after a second glance, mistake him for the other.

A prominent jeweler of the city identified the ring as one that Geoffrey Carrington had purchased of him. The stone was rare and of great value, and he had never seen its duplicate. Another jeweler identified the ring as one that the prisoner had brought to his store to have engraved with the words, *Mein Liebchen*. He also declared the jewel to be unusually beautiful and costly. He had asked his customer where he had obtained the ring, and received an evasive reply.

The defense had little to offer. It was evident they were suppressing evidence and committing themselves to as little as possible. The prisoner's friends testified to his good character; but as they were chiefly unknown themselves, their evidence carried little weight. They also testified to his abrupt departure from Mount Lowe and to his unexplained absences on other occasions, and to his evident ignorance of his condition during these intervals.

Gottfried himself was either unable or unwilling to give a clear account of his whereabouts on the night of Geoffrey Carrington's disappearance. He admitted that he had passed a part of the night in question at the lodging-house, leaving the place the next morning. He admitted also the challenge to the duel; but he denied that he had ever seen the man known as Rex Carrington, although he had had business dealings with him. He admitted his possession of the ring, but declared that he did not know how it came upon his person. He

corroborated the testimony of Constance Wilbur and Heinrich Dierssen as to the intervals of lapse of memory.

The prisoner's counsel, who had been closeted in his office with Heinrich Dierssen an hour that morning before the trial, endeavored to have the case dismissed on the ground of irresponsibility; but the justice, in view of the strong circumstantial evidence against the prisoner, and the lack of sufficient evidence of insanity, held him to answer to a charge of murder in the first degree, the trial being set for three weeks from that day. On account of the prisoner's known tendency to leave his home with no clue to his whereabouts, he refused to allow bail; although Chester Robins, the art dealer, and one of the painter's wealthy patrons were in court ready to give bonds for him.

XV

A STARTLING THEORY

DURING the three weeks that preceded the trial, Heinrich Dierssen received at intervals packages of books which he studied diligently at home and subsequently took to the office of Watson and Bernard, Gottfried Jäger's counsel. Charles Bernard, who was to plead the case, followed the marked passages or listened to Heinrich's translations with increasing interest and frequent ejaculations of amazement.

"I believe we 'll win the case yet," he said, rubbing his hands together with anticipatory satisfaction. "And you really think we can prove" —

"Yes," said Heinrich eagerly, tapping his finger on the open page of the book he had been reading; "that is my theory."

"There was never such a case in the

courts before," said the lawyer; and for some reason he burst into laughter.

"But such a thing will need a great deal of substantiation," he continued. "We must make out a calendar very carefully. A comparison of dates may give plausibility to our theory, or it may destroy it altogether."

Under his direction and with the assistance of Constance and Emma Burroughs, Heinrich made out a table of dates, showing the day of Gottfried's departures and the length of his absence. The only localities that they were able to attach to them were Catalina Island and the lodging-house of William Beck.

Next they made note of the dates when Rex Carrington had failed to keep his appointments with Gottfried; at the dealer's, at Redondo for the duel; and finally, they added the night he went to the lodging-house.

"There is a great deal of work to be done right here," said Bernard; "and I will do as much as possible before the trial.

What we fail to get by that time must be brought out in the cross-examination. But look here. Suppose your theory is right and the prisoner anticipates the trial — ha! ha!" and he burst into another peal of laughter.

"He would not be believed if he did," said Heinrich. "You need not fear for your laurels."

"You have missed your vocation, young man," said Bernard, as Heinrich rose to leave the office; "you should have been a lawyer."

"Thank you," said Heinrich. "But if I had not been a doctor, where would your case have been?"

"True, true," said Bernard, rubbing his hands delightedly; "I would never have thought of it in the world."

But when his visitor had departed, he sank back in his chair and fell into thought. At length he shook his head and roused himself from his reverie.

"It 's a chance, and we 'll work it out,"

he said to himself, "but, after all, I doubt it, I doubt it."

In the meantime, Gottfried endured his imprisonment with patience and resignation. However uncertain the future might be, he knew that in intent, at least, he was innocent of wrong; and he felt that at length the shadow of mystery was to be lifted from his life. Sometimes, indeed, he was tortured by strange doubts. Was he in reality a madman, whose hopeless condition was lit up by fitful gleams of intelligence, during which he had met and loved Constance Wilbur? Was his art the one permanent thing he had carried with him from his former life through those regions of darkness in which reason was eclipsed? But still he clung passionately to his love and his art as the two eternal verities in the mysteries and uncertainties of his strange existence.

His lawyer came to see him frequently, and questioned him closely, not only as to the recent events of his history, but also

concerning his remote past. Gottfried was mortified and annoyed that he could not give him more definite information. His childhood and youth seemed to have receded into so distant a past that it was with difficulty he could recall any familiar faces and forms. For this reason he had never spoken of his past to Constance or to any of his friends. And yet, there were shadowy, elusive recollections, and more or less distinct memories of his early surroundings. His home was somewhere on the Rhine, among the castled crags that overlooked the stream. He remembered that in his early childhood he sat by the waves and watched for the water fays that never came. Even as he grew older, he spent much of his time in pensive meditation and dreams of these beautiful creatures who could ensnare the hearts of men. He had spent much of his time, too, by the sea; and had dreamed of the *Meerfrau* rising out of the waves and kissing him with her cool lips, trying to warm herself with his human love. He

could see the moon rise from the clouds like a giant orange, and stream over the gray sea in golden glances. Then he wandered on the shore where the white waves broke, and heard sweet words spoken in the water. Then, in the long night, when his heart could not rest, he had called the beautiful nixy to come and dance and sing her magic measures. He had begged her to lay his head in her lap and kiss the life out of his breast. Then in imagination he left the sea and the skies with their white mists and climbed the mountains, wandering through the pines where springs bubbled up and the proud herds wandered and the sweet thrush sang. He climbed the mountains with their great rock-heights, where the castle ruins stood gray in the light of morning. He saw the hut of the miner on the mountain, and heard the rustle of the green fir-trees, and saw the brightness of the golden moon. There were never moons so large and golden as in Germany; there were never pines with whose rustling mingled such weird

suggestions of elfin voices. And the stars shone on him out of the great heaven; and in the winter the cold mountain heights were buried in glistening snow. It was very beautiful, that *Deutschland* that he loved; but yet it was so vague and far away.

Of the loved ones that surrounded his childhood, he had the most shadowy recollections. The faces were dim and blurred, but the figures were more distinct. He knew that in the evening his blind grandmother sat in the easy-chair that in German families is reserved for the aged, — in this case, a leathern elbow-chair; that his mother sat spinning with white thread, and his father played the zither, singing softly the old fairy-lore he loved. There was a little sister, too, who sat on a low stool and laid her arm across his knee. Her eyes were like two blue stars, and her little mouth like a soft red rose. And when he looked at her, she smiled and laid her lily-finger across the rose-petals of her lips.

But they were all gone, and he was alone in a strange land; and a veil whose darkness he could not penetrate lay over his life. He knew he had been alone in the city, ignorant of any language save German; and that he had sought out a teacher and studied painting. Then he had opened his studio, and after that, his recollections, save for the intervals of absence, were continuous and distinct.

Some of these things he told his lawyer, who smiled and rubbed his hands and said the case was coming on all right. Gottfried thought it was professional cheerfulness assumed to mask the seriousness of the situation. He thought it a little hard that Heinrich, too, was cheerful and inclined to unseasonable mirth.

Every day Constance came to see him, and brought him flowers from her little garden at home. She put in his cell the potted fern that had stood on the window-sill of his studio, and brought him his favorite books.

The girl herself, to whom Heinrich had

communicated his hopes, was full of forebodings. She shuddered at thought of her lover's possible madness; but her heart sank with unutterable dread at thought of a greater calamity, in which his heart would no longer be hers. And when Heinrich would have reassured her, she would not be comforted.

Before Gottfried she tried to appear cheerful; but he knew the sadness that lay behind her smiles, and loved her the better for it.

So the days passed and the long nights of torturing wakefulness, when she lay tearless, with a sense of weight on her breast; longing to cry out, but suppressing the impulse to shuddering moans.

The morning of the opening of the trial broke, with the rustle of leaves and the twittering of birds; and as Constance opened her window, the odor of blossoms came to her with the stream of light that flooded her room.

XVI

THE TRIAL

THE court-room was crowded when Constance entered with Mrs. Dierssen. She looked over the faces, some eager and expectant, others marked with blasé indifference or morbid craving for sensational developments. The prominence of Rex Carrington alone would have filled the place; but added to this was the interest excited by the unexplained mystery that hung over the prisoner's life, and by the beauty of the girl who was supposed to have been the indirect cause of the tragedy.

She turned from the curious scrutiny that answered her gaze to Gottfried; and she realized more than ever before the change that a few weeks had wrought in him. But he smiled as his eyes met hers, and she saw that his courage had not yet failed him.

The greater part of the morning was occupied by the testimony of Henry Perkins, the valet. In addition to the evidence he had given at the preliminary trial, he testified that his master was in the habit of leaving the house during the night that followed heavy drinking, and of remaining away from home for various periods, ranging from a day to several weeks in duration. More than once before the night of his final disappearance, witness had tried to follow him, but had always been foiled in the attempt. Either his master slipped away when he thought him asleep, or saw him in pursuit and turned on him furiously, compelling him to go back. Frequently, on his return, his master warned him not to attempt to find him, and charged him to keep his mother and all his friends ignorant of his absence. In order to do this the more successfully, witness had feigned that his master suffered from delirium tremens; and Mrs. Carrington had always accepted this explanation until the last unfortunate occurrence. On cross-

examination, he testified that it was nearly a year since his master began to drink heavily and to leave his home; and witness had always supposed he spent the time of his absence in debauch.

In reply to further questions from the attorney for the defense, the witness gave, as nearly as he could recollect, the dates upon which his master had become intoxicated and subsequently left his home.

"Did he remember the events that had occurred while he was away?" asked Bernard.

"He never referred to them," was the reply; "but it was none of my business, and Mr. Rex kept a good many things to himself."

Heinrich Dierssen, sitting in the court-room, smiled; and Charles Bernard made a note as he signified that the witness might retire.

Several days were occupied by the testimony for the prosecution. The evidence was in the main the same as in the prelimi-

nary trial, the chief difference being that, in the cross-examination, dates were brought out as much as possible. Alicia Ferris was cross-examined closely. Did she know Gottfried Jäger? Could she swear that the picture in the locket was not the portrait of Geoffrey Carrington? Could she swear it was the portrait of the prisoner at the bar?

To these questions Miss Ferris replied that she had never met Gottfried Jäger; that she had thought at first the picture in the locket was the portrait of Geoffrey Carrington; that she had changed her opinion on account of the difference of expression. She could swear now that it was not the portrait of Geoffrey Carrington, but that of the prisoner at the bar.

When the evidence was all in, notwithstanding the apparent complacency of Charles Bernard, it seemed to the people that had crowded the court-room throughout the proceedings that Gottfried Jäger stood little chance of acquittal. It was generally thought the defense would be based on tem-

porary or periodic insanity, during an attack of which the crime had been committed. Even the prisoner, who had followed the proceedings with increasing horror and despair, shared in the general expectation.

When the attorney for the defense rose to make his opening speech, so sure did the auditors feel of the line he would take that little excitement was apparent; but the general indifference was destined to be broken by a shock of surprise.

"I shall endeavor to prove to you the innocence of my client," he said, "not by casting discredit upon the evidence that has already been given, for every word of it is needed to substantiate the facts I shall show in the evidence for the defense. I shall not try to prove an alibi nor break a single link in the chain of circumstantial evidence against the accused. So far from doing so, gentlemen of the jury, I declare to you openly in the presence of the court that I believe every word of the witnesses that have already appeared before you to be true.

Neither shall I urge the plea of temporary insanity, which would be a tacit admission of the crime. So far from making use of any of these devices, I shall endeavor to prove the innocence of my client by the strongest evidence possible in the case; I mean by producing in court the supposed victim of the crime of which he stands accused."

At these words, a wave of excitement passed over the throng; and the prisoner himself bent forward eagerly, hanging upon the words of his counsel.

"Gentlemen of the jury," continued the lawyer, sinking his voice to low, vibrating tones, "Geoffrey Hunter Carrington stands before you at the bar of this court, arraigned for the murder of himself."

If an earthquake had shaken the walls of the building, the excitement could not have been more intense. The people rose to their feet, and the murmur of voices over the court-room, broken by ejaculations, deepened to a roar. It was several minutes before order could be restored. In the mean-

time, the defendant had sunk back in his chair, with bloodless cheeks and eyes that seemed starting from his head. Mrs. Carrington covered her face with her hands, and Alicia Ferris turned a shade paler. The face of Constance Wilbur quivered, but she kept her eyes fixed steadily on her lover.

"We shall endeavor to show, gentlemen of the jury," the attorney went on, "that the periods of Gottfried Jäger's life, so far as known to the public, coincide with the periods that Geoffrey Carrington was supposed to pass in delirium tremens or in wild debauch, and that the periods of life of Geoffrey Carrington known to the public correspond with the periods when Gottfried Jäger was mysteriously absent from his friends. We shall show that although several urgent appointments were made between the men, they never met; we shall show that Geoffrey Carrington went to Catalina Island and that Gottfried Jäger returned; we shall show that Gottfried Jäger

left his friends without explanation or apology at Echo Mountain, and the same evening Geoffrey Carrington appeared at his home after a prolonged absence. We shall show that Gottfried Jäger was taken by a servant and by the sister of Miss Ferris for Geoffrey Carrington; we shall show that Geoffrey Carrington was seen on a bicycle by a friend of Gottfried Jäger's, and would have been taken for the latter had it not been known Jäger did not ride. Finally, gentlemen of the jury, we shall show that Geoffrey Carrington entered the lodging-house of William Beck and retired to his room, and that in the morning Gottfried Jäger issued from it as guiltless of crime as the butterfly that emerges from the chrysalis is innocent of the death of the caterpillar from which it sprang. In short, we shall show that the prisoner at the bar is subject to periodic amnesia; that is, that he has a dual personality, in each condition being ignorant of the events that have transpired during the other; that in the first condition

he is known as Geoffrey or Rex Carrington, and in the second as Gottfried Jäger. We shall show that the change from the first to the second personality is caused by over-indulgence in alcoholic drinks; while the change from the second to the first is entirely involuntary, the period of the second condition seeming to depend upon the degree of inebriety by which it was induced. We shall show by medical and scientific authority that the diversity of character between the two, including habits, speech, movements, and even the knowledge of languages, is only the stronger evidence of their identity. We shall show that Gottfried Jäger, whose very name is only the German translation of Geoffrey Hunter, has dreamed for himself a past from the poems of Heine, of which Geoffrey Carrington was an enthusiastic student; and that, in common with other subjects of this disease, he forgot his mother-tongue, and retained the language which was the last that Geoffrey Carrington had acquired, even speaking it with greater facility,

his memory on that subject being excited to abnormal activity."

As the testimony proceeded, step by step the coincidence of dates was brought out with startling accuracy. The baron testified to Carrington's studies and rapid advance in proficiency since conversing with him; little Lillian Ferris and the servant who admitted the prisoner testified to his call the morning Miss Ferris had gone out to drive, when they had taken him for Geoffrey Carrington.

Gottfried himself substantiated the evidence of the other witnesses, even to the call on Miss Ferris, when he had been received as a habitual visitor at the house; but so far from availing himself of the opportunity of escape that had so unexpectedly offered, he disclaimed his identity with Rex Carrington, and declared that although his recollections of the distant past were vague, they were attended by the emotions of love and veneration that one has for his early home.

Heinrich Dierssen was again called to the

witness-stand, and read from the "Heimkehr" and the "Harzreise" the lines descriptive of the country and the home and the family Gottfried had pictured as belonging to his own childhood. He also testified as to the phenomena of periodic amnesia, being confirmed in this by the expert testimony of a well-known medical practitioner, the best local authority on diseases of the brain.

Mrs. Carrington and the valet, who had at first taken the defendant for Rex Carrington, now vehemently denied the identity; for, notwithstanding the statements that had been made as to the existence, in cases of periodic amnesia, of two distinct personalities, they could not connect the quiet, serious dignity of this man with the reckless, impetuous nature of the young millionaire.

The speeches for the prosecution and for the defense were both strong, and sentiment seemed to be almost evenly divided. Bernard, to support his theory of periodic amnesia, read extracts from "Diseases of the

Memory," by Ribot, "Illusions of Memory," by Sully, and "Character in Health and Disease," by Dr. Azam, at the time of the publication of his book President of the Academy of Sciences of Bordeaux and Correspondent of the Academy of Medicine of Paris. Among the instances, he read from Ribot's "Diseases of the Memory" an account of the case of Felida X——, reported by Dr. Azam.

"In the case of Felida X——," he read in conclusion, translating from the book by Dr. Azam he held in his hand, "the differences of character are very remarkable. In the normal state, or in the first condition, Felida was reserved, sad, melancholy. . . . In the second condition, and at the close of the brief sleep that constitutes the period of transition, her face was illumined with gayety, her extreme reserve had disappeared, and she became handsome and smiling. There could be nothing more striking than this contrast.

"It was the same with a young boy who presented an analogous state. . . .

"Facts of this kind are too infrequent to enable us to establish a rule. But it is probable that in all cases of doubling of personality, differences of character play an important part."

The favorable effect produced by these citations was somewhat disturbed by the closing speech of the prosecution, in which an appeal was made to common sense, and the jury urged not to give credence to a story that surpassed in wild improbability the tales of the Arabian Nights.

As the speech was drawing to a close, Gottfried Jäger, who had been sitting motionless, with his sunken eyes fixed on the speaker's face, put his hand suddenly to his heart and fell forward on the desk before him. Bernard attempted to raise him, but in an instant he had sprung to his feet and looked about the court-room in amazement. The expression of his face had changed completely, giving him the appearance of another man.

"What the deuce does this mean?" he

exclaimed angrily, looking from the excited faces of those about him to the judge, who had started to his feet with a smothered exclamation. "What am I here for?"

The voice was pitched higher than that of Gottfried Jäger, and the German accent was entirely wanting. A stir of excitement passed like an electric shock among the spectators, and a murmur of whispered comments and muttered ejaculations arose; for, thin and pale as the face had become, it was stamped unmistakably with a personality familiar to many in the room.

"My son! my son!" cried Mrs. Carrington, rushing to him and throwing her arms about his neck.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, disengaging her arms gently, and looking at her in surprise.

The judge sat looking on, bewildered into temporary inaction, leaning forward in his chair, and gripping his desk with his lean fingers. Some of the jurors had risen to their feet, and others sat open-mouthed and

with staring eyes. A profound hush had fallen upon the court-room. In a moment it was broken by a sob. The prisoner at the bar looked in the direction of the sound, and his face lit up with a sudden tenderness that for a fleeting moment recalled the face of Gottfried Jäger.

"The Madonna!" he exclaimed; but Constance bowed her head in her hands and wept.

The court-room was in confusion. Mrs. Carrington had fainted, and the valet broke into wild vociferations of the identity of the prisoner and his master. The people rose to their feet and began to press toward the front, where the defendant stood with folded arms, looking about him, expectant and defiant. The judge, in doubt how to conduct proceedings under the unprecedented circumstances, hastily adjourned court. The next day, Gottfried Jäger was declared innocent of the crime with which he had been charged.

XVII

A REBUFF

SEVERAL days later, Constance sat at evening by the window, her head thrown back against her chair, her hands lying listless in her lap. The paleness of her face was accentuated by the dark dress she wore, and the sweet mouth was drawn in lines of grief.

Ever since Heinrich Dierssen had first confided to her his theory concerning Gottfried, she had tried to prepare herself for the climax that had occurred at the close of the trial; but her efforts had been powerless to soften the shock of that terrible moment when her lover had been blotted from existence before her eyes. A thousand times since she had wished for the common sorrow of humanity; for the long watching around the death-bed, the stillness and the perfume

of flowers in the room where the form was coffined, the quiet resting-place in the shadowed city of the dead, and, after it all, with the tears and the heartache of remembrance, the hope of immortality. But none of this was for her. She was set aside to suffer a strange destiny, outside the pale of the sympathy of others. Her lover was not dead; *he had never really been.* She might as well have loved a shadow or a dream.

But the thought of that other personality that dared to wear the face and form of her lover, returned to torture her. It was as though the moon, whose face had beamed in tender beauty for ages on the earth, should turn to view its hidden side, seamed, discolored, terrible. From Rex Carrington she instinctively shrank with dislike and fear; for Gottfried Jäger she yearned with inexpressible longing.

She started as the gate-latch clicked; it almost seemed that the familiar tread of her lover must follow the sound. But the steps

that approached the house were quick and impetuous, and were followed by a pull at the bell that startled her.

She answered the ring, and started back with a low cry; Rex Carrington stood before her. She had not time to collect her thoughts, when he had stepped in the hallway and closed the door behind him.

"I have found you at last," he said, "and, best of all, in fulfillment of the hopes of my wildest dreams, you are my fiancée."

He put his arm around her, and would have drawn her to him, but she drew away and motioned him back.

"Do not dare to touch me," she cried, "Gottfried Jäger was my lover; Rex Carrington is a stranger."

The young man fell back and looked at her in amazement.

"But I, too, love you," he cried. "I have loved you ever since I first saw the face of the Madonna in the window. Every day of my life since then I have looked at your picture and worshiped you."

She stood silent before him, unmoved by his passionate appeal.

"I do not understand," he went on, "why you will not love me. I am Gottfried, and I have loved you always, in both conditions of my dual existence. It was on account of your pictured face that I broke off my engagement with Alicia Ferris. I have brought you the ring," and he drew it from his pocket; "let me put it on your finger now."

She drew farther away from him, and stood with her hands clasped behind her.

"It is useless to speak of it," she said; "you are not Gottfried, and I can never love you."

Again he looked at her in bewilderment. He did not realize the great difference of personality between himself and Gottfried Jäger, and he had been so sure of success when he found that the accepted lover no longer stood in his way. In fact, he had considered Constance as engaged to himself, and did not doubt that she felt bound to

him as well. He could not understand her refusal; he could not conceive how she could give up a lover, and at the same time the position and opportunities he offered her.

"But I will make you my wife," he said; "you will be the mistress of my house; we will travel, and I will present you at the courts of Europe. You shall study music in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, wherever you like; or you shall be the queen of drawing-rooms and salons. Your face would be the rage in society; your life would be a succession of pleasures. There is nothing I would not do for you, even to settling upon you the half of my fortune."

But as he spoke, the girl had drawn herself up to her full height and stood confronting him, her eyes blazing with anger and scorn.

"And you," she cried, "you, in the egotism of wealth, think that I can be — bought. Mr. Carrington, I have the honor of wishing you good-evening."

She stepped forward as she spoke and

opened the door. Mechanically, he moved to pass out, but drew back and looked at her with a changed expression. Behind the pride and scorn of her face, he saw the pain and the passion of regret, and his imperious nature was touched alike by her beauty and her distress.

"Forgive me," he said; "I am a brute, I should know better than to speak to you like that. But my love drives me mad. I have worshiped your face for months, and now that I have found you, I cannot give you up. Give me some hope, some opportunity to speak to you again. I will be less impetuous; I will be careful not to offend you. Only tell me that I may come to see you again. Do not turn me away from your house — like this."

Her face had softened, and suddenly she held out her hand.

"I am sorry," she said, "but it is better that we should not meet again. It was the personality of Gottfried Jäger that I loved, and not his face and form. You are as

different as though you were indeed another man."

He bowed over her hand and lifted it for a moment to his lips; then he stumbled out into the darkness.

Half an hour later, when he entered his study, the face of the Madonna smiled at him as he feared the living face would never do. He thought of the look of scorn the girl had flung upon him, Rex Carrington, who had been wont to boast of his power over women, and he thought of the words with which she had spurned his wealth. But he loved her the better and desired her the more.

He flung himself down in his easy-chair opposite the picture, and fell to thinking of the strange fate that had drawn her to him, only to separate them forever. He fell to wondering what there was in the personality of Gottfried Jäger that had won her heart, and what there was in himself that evidently repelled her. Perhaps, he thought, his second personality was the realization of

the best of which his nature was capable, and he reflected, with an impatient sigh, that in his normal personality there was plenty of room for improvement.

"Hang it all!" he exclaimed, "why can't I stay Gottfried Jäger instead of Rex Carrington? I could take my own name and claim my own property, and still retain her love. I cannot even play the part, for I don't know anything about him except what I have been told. I cannot paint pictures, nor even call her '*mein Liebchen*,' without a detestable English accent."

He had taken the ring from his pocket, and was examining the inscription.

"My little love!" he murmured, and for a moment his impetuous heart bowed to the sorrow of what seemed his inevitable fate.

Then he was struck by a sudden thought. He turned his face from the picture and touched a bell in the wall behind his chair. He leaned back and folded his arms.

Perkins appeared in the doorway and waited for him to speak.

"Bring me two bottles of Mumm, a pint of Sauterne, and a flask of Burgundy from the new case of Pommard."

"Now, Mr. Rex, or when the other gentlemen come?"

"Now," was the reply, "there will be no other gentlemen."

The servant started away, hesitated, and turned back.

"Mr. Rex," he said, "it's not my place to tell you what to do; but you know what 'll happen if you drink that yourself."

"Do as I bid you," said Rex impatiently. "You are right; it is not your place to tell me what to do."

Again the servant turned to go, and this time he was stopped by his master.

"Bring me my check book and the cash you got at the bank to-day."

Perkins disappeared, and Rex leaned back in his chair and fell to meditating again.

He happened to glance at the table and saw a volume of Heine, open and face down. He picked it up, and with a smile turned

over the leaves, trying to trace in its lines the pictures of Gottfried Jäger's early home, as it had been described to him.

> "Die blinde Grossmutter sitzt ja,
> Im ledernen Lehnstuhl dort."

"That is the blind grandmother in the leathern elbow-chair; and here," turning the pages rapidly, "is the dear little sister, with eyes that he calls '*die lieben blauen Sterne.*'"

He sighed and laid the book down. Perkins had entered with the money and the wine.

When the servant had retired, Rex put the check book and the gold in his pocket. He opened a bottle of champagne, and filling his glass, held it a moment to the light, looking at the pale amber with the satisfaction of a connoisseur. Then, holding the glass toward the pictured Madonna, he proposed his solitary toast: "To the success of Gottfried Jäger."

XVIII

AN UNSUCCESSFUL RUSE

CONSTANCE bent over her mother's couch and kissed her.

"Good-by," she said; "I won't be gone long this morning."

"If she only could love him," the invalid said to herself as her daughter passed out of the room, "she would not have to wear herself out with work and live a lonely life. But I will not blame her, for I, too, followed the dictates of my heart."

She turned her face to the window, watching for the nod and smile that Constance would give her as she passed on the street. But she waited in vain.

As the girl stepped into the hallway, she heard the gate-latch, and the next instant she had put her hand to her heart. A step that she had not forgotten was coming rapidly

up the walk. She flung the door open, her breath coming in gasps.

"Gottfried!" she cried.

"*Mein Liebchen!*" exclaimed the young man, entering and closing the door behind him.

He held out his arms, and with a sudden impulse of passionate yearning she flung herself on his breast. He strained her to his heart, murmuring over her terms of endearment in the German tongue. It was indeed Gottfried, and not Rex, who had returned to her; and she clung to him with a wild wish that she might cheat fate and hold him to her forever.

"Do not go away, do not leave me, Gottfried, or I shall die," she said brokenly.

"Never, *mein Liebchen*," he said; "never while I have the power to remain. But come," he added, leading her into the room and seating her beside him; "there are many things that you must tell me. This cursed mystery hangs over me yet. I awoke this morning in my studio, and the last that

I could remember I was in the court-room on trial for my life, and it seemed that the evidence was going against me. *Mein Liebchen, mein Liebchen*, tell me if I am innocent."

"You are innocent," she assured him; "Rex Carrington was produced in court."

"Thank God," he said fervently; "nothing else matters now. You will marry me, Constance, for I cannot give you up. The sacrifice is too great to ask of you, but I cannot give you up. Tell me that you will marry me, *mein Liebchen*."

For answer, she flung her arms out over his knees and, laying her head upon them, burst into tumultuous sobs.

He threw his arm about her and lifted her head to his breast.

"What is it, *mein Liebchen?*" he said. "What can I say to comfort you?"

"Oh, Gottfried! Gottfried!" she moaned, "how can I tell you the truth?"

"But tell me, *mein Liebchen*," he entreated; "I can bear anything now, since I

am innocent and I have you. What more do I want?"

Still for a moment she did not speak. Her moans were like those of a wild thing of the woods stricken to death; and they pierced the heart of Gottfried with anguish. He caressed her silently, suffering her grief to spend itself a little; then he begged her to tell him her trouble. When she spoke at last, it was with a rush of impetuous words.

"How can I tell you that I dare not marry you," she said; "that even now, as I hold you in my arms, you may slip away from me, and leave me in the embrace of a man I abhor? If I could only hold you forever" — Her voice broke, and she hid her face in his breast.

"What do you mean?" he cried in sudden fear. "Am I so terrible — sometimes? Am I a maniac, an idiot, an object of loathing and disgust? Tell me, *mein Liebchen*, for I must know the truth."

"Gottfried," she asked solemnly, lifting her head and looking in his face, "would you want me to marry Rex Carrington?"

"*Mein Gott, nein*," he cried. "That careless, reckless breaker of women's hearts, that victim of drink, that" —

"Hush," she said gently, laying her fingers across his lips. "If you do not want me to marry him, then I cannot marry you."

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed, kissing her fingers as he drew them away.

"I mean," she said, shuddering as she uttered the words, "that you and Rex Carrington are — the same man."

The last words were almost a whisper, and for a moment Gottfried did not comprehend them. Then, as their full significance broke upon him and the scenes of the trial he had forgotten recurred to him, he groaned and covered his face with his hands. In an instant, however, he had again drawn Constance into his arms, straining her to him with a despairing and passionate tenderness. Neither of them saw that the portières had been drawn aside and the invalid, who had not crossed her room before for many months, stood silently regarding them.

Suddenly Gottfried put his hand to his heart and a shudder passed through his frame. A moment later, Constance felt his arm tighten about her.

"So, so, little Constance, I have you at last," said a voice, pitched higher than Gottfried's and without the German accent. It was the voice of Rex Carrington.

"No," he said, as she tried to draw herself from his arms; "I shall not let you go so easily. That was a brilliant thought — to turn myself into Gottfried Jäger; and since he has done my wooing so well for me, I am going to keep you until you promise to be my wife."

He bent his head toward her face, but before his lips touched her cheek she had sprung from his arms.

"Mother!" she cried, as the form in the doorway swayed and would have fallen had she not supported it.

"Come back," she said gently, leading her mother to her couch and making her lie down. "I will send him away."

She returned to the other room and looked

coldly at her guest, who had risen and stood before her.

"Did I understand you rightly?" she demanded. "Did you change yourself to Gottfried Jäger deliberately and for the purpose of influencing me?"

"Certainly," he said, trying to speak lightly. "It is fortunate I hold the key to the transition. Whenever I become intolerable to you as Rex Carrington, all I need is a bottle of champagne" —

She lifted her hand as though to ward off a blow; and as he saw the agony of her face, his voice faltered and stopped.

"Now go," she said with a voice of indignant scorn; "and if you wish to retain the slightest measure of my respect, never enter my house again."

He opened his lips to protest, but dropped his eyes before her glance, and passed out of the house in silence.

A few days later, as Constance glanced over the morning paper, she saw in a society notice that Rex Carrington had gone to New York to sail for Europe.

XIX

VICTORY

Two years had passed since the morning Constance Wilbur had sent her lover away.

The Carrington house on Figueroa Street had been unoccupied save by care-takers and servants for more than a year. Mrs. Carrington, who had never entirely recovered from the shock of her son's disappearance, and the subsequent developments of the trial, had at last succumbed to heart failure. All cablegrams and letters sent to the latest address Rex had given, had failed to elicit response ; and the funeral had been held, perforce, without the attendance of a single mourner. Subsequently, his friends learned that he had been with a party in the Orient; and upon his return to Europe, he had written instructions to his legal adviser, declaring his intention of remaining abroad.

But that morning, on the anniversary of his scornful dismissal by Constance, he emerged early from his stateroom on the Pullman sleeper, looking eagerly for familiar landmarks as he neared the end of his long journey. He had traveled from Paris with no more delay than was necessary to make connection of steamer and train ; and as the distance lessened between him and the woman he still loved, his impatience visibly increased.

He had looked at his face in the glass that morning, and knew that it was much changed. The expression, indeed, was more that of Gottfried than of Rex ; but lines of sorrow and of the mastery of the will over the passions had been added, giving it firmness and a certain pathos that had been found in neither of the two.

As the train swept by over the desert, with its blinding glare broken by weird gnarled trees of cactus that stretched their misshapen branches in the hot air, the events of the past two years passed rapidly through his mind.

He had left his home in a blind mad rage with fate; cursing his misfortunes, and caring only for excitement in which he might forget the past. Arriving in Europe, he had sought the famous gambling-places, and alternately lost and won vast sums of money; he had gone to Paris, and plunged into the gayeties of the world's pleasure-city; he had visited his uncle in England, and been presented at court and introduced to London society in the height of the season; he had joined a party of cyclists through Normandy; he had ascended the Matterhorn and climbed the Hartz Mountains, following the course of Heine. But it was all to no avail. The face of Constance was always before him, and the thought of the love he had lost.

He began to wonder what Gottfried Jäger was like, and if it would not be possible for him to change himself by a persistent and conscious effort into the personality that in some way derived its being from his own brain. He settled down in Paris and hired a studio, and began to study painting. At

this time he knew nothing of the art; he had not learned the first principles of drawing.

"How the deuce did I ever paint that Madonna?" he asked himself savagely, as he tried in vain to draw the outlines of the face.

But he did not give up, and after the first few lessons he made such rapid strides that his work was considered phenomenal.

However, he was not satisfied with this branch of development alone. He began to dream for himself an ideal, and this ideal was such a man as a girl like Constance would love; and slowly and painfully, with many lapses into the passion and recklessness of his old life, he had learned to live up to it. There was one weakness that he had mastered by a single effort of the will; he had never touched wine since the night he had drank to the success of Gottfried Jäger. He knew instinctively now that his other personality would not help him; that the lofty nature of Gottfried would not consent to the sacrifice of the woman he loved

to a man like Rex Carrington; and he knew that Constance herself would receive Gottfried Jäger no longer. He understood, too, that although he held the power of transition from Rex to Gottfried, Gottfried himself was beyond his control. In the second condition, there was no means by which, should he so desire, he could regain his lost personality. And so he had lived on and worked and dared to dream sometimes that he might yet become worthy of the woman he loved.

The only break in the labor of his art was made by his trip to the Orient, during which his mother had died. After his return, he settled himself again in his studio, and before long, to his own amazement, he began to achieve fame.

It was in the spring of that year that he went to Rome to study, and lingered too long into the hot season, and was stricken down with the fever. For many days he was delirious. At last, however, he began to come to himself. As he did so, he became gradu-

ally conscious of two sets of memories and two currents of emotions. Now he was Rex Carrington, speeding on his wheel over the Santa Monica road, or sitting in his study and gazing wistfully on the face of the Madonna. Again, he was Gottfried Jäger, unable to speak a word of English, and taking his first lessons of an obscure Los Angeles artist, or watching Constance Wilbur as she passed his studio window. And so he passed in sequence through the double life of Rex and Gottfried, even through the transition period, when dazed and uncertain of the morrow, with a sort of blind instinct, he had hired the room in William Beck's lodging-house, that his metamorphosis might remain a secret to his friends. He understood now that the transition from the first to the second condition was made during sleep, and required a much longer period than the return to the normal personality. But it was chiefly of Constance that he thought; and it was with a wild joy that he remembered the rapture of holding her

in his arms and listening to her low sweet voice as it spoke to him words of love.

"*Mein Liebchen!*" he cried; and the voice was deeper than his own, and the English accent was gone. And yet, while he was Gottfried, he was Rex; the two personalities had at last merged into one.

From that moment he resolved to go to Constance and win her back to him; and with the new hope and the new joy, his strength came to him rapidly. As soon as he was able to travel, he returned to Paris, settled his affairs there, and took the steamer for home.

The train sped on over the desert; but he thought no longer of the past; he was busy with the present and the imminent future of to-day.

It was early evening when he found himself at last in front of Constance Wilbur's home. His heart beat violently and his breath came fast; for he caught sight of a graceful figure, robed in pale rose, standing among the geraniums. He opened the gate

and stepped into the garden; but the next instant he stopped, frozen with fear. A little toddling child, half hidden among the flowers, was clinging to her dress.

He turned away with a groan and would have retraced his steps; but the figure turned suddenly, and he found himself face to face with the woman of his dreams. The heart-shaped face was the same, but chastened and etherealized by sorrow and the brave endeavor to live worthily a life that had outlasted hope and happiness. Old thoughts and memories of his dual love surged in his brain. His eyes looked into hers with a tender longing, and involuntarily he held out his hands to her.

"Gottfried!" she cried; "Gottfried!"

"Yes," he replied; "I am Gottfried — and Rex."

He seized the hand she held out to him and led her to a seat under a pepper-tree. Then he poured forth the story of his life since he had left her; he told of his love and his struggle to attain the higher person-

ality of the man she loved, and at last of the gift of double memory that had come to him.

And as she heard him, she wept, and he thought they were tears of pity for the hopelessness of his love.

As he finished his tale, she lifted her eyes to his; they were luminous.

"Don't look at me like that, Constance," he entreated; "it is hard enough for me to lose you after my foolish dreams. Oh! how many hours I have thought of having you in my empty house and in my empty heart. There is room for your mother, too, in both. My own mother is dead, and I had hoped" —

"Gottfried — Rex!" she cried, "I am not lost to you; I — I love you."

He looked at her in amazement; then at the child that was playing at her feet.

"Oh!" she said, blushing and breaking into a ripple of laughter, "the child is Emma's; Heinrich's and Emma's, you know. They live here; they have been married nearly two years. And see," she added,

drawing from the folds of her dress a silver locket, in the centre of which shone a pearl; "I have worn it always — next my heart."

A wave of light swept over his face. He leaned towards her in the gathering darkness.

"And you, *mein Liebchen*, you will come then to my house — my heart" —

She did not answer in words, but she suffered him to draw her into his arms. And it was thus that Heinrich and Emma found them when they went out to look for the child.

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